

BORN TO DIE



2016 HOLLYWOOD TALENT

LUKA VAN DEN
DRIESSCHEN

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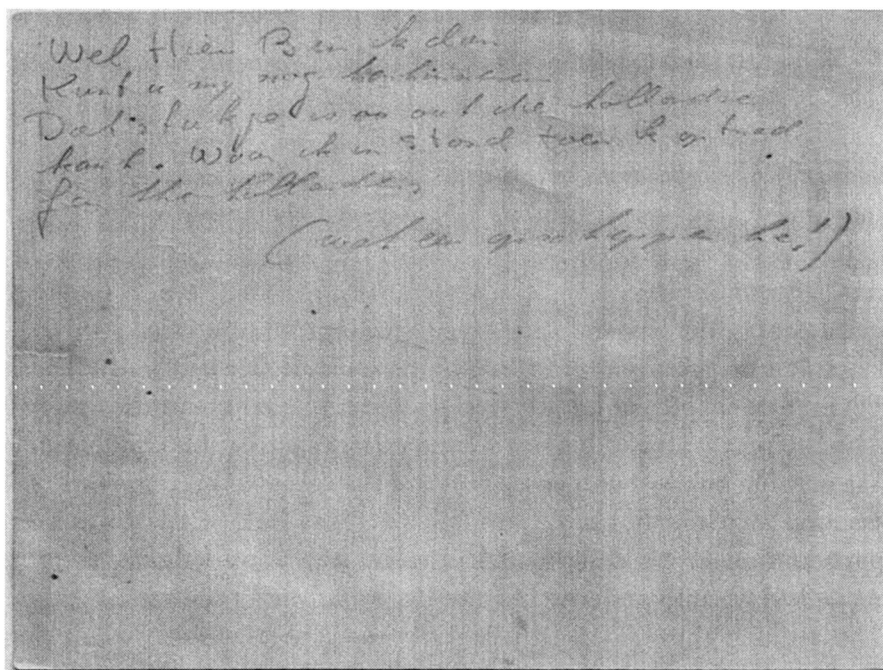
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Why this book?

What he got right in this life was the fact that he was left in Australia as 15-year-old by his parents. This fact alone suggested to me a mystery. How was it possible to have such a devastating experience? What also surprised me was his boundless energy and zest for life, and his continuing struggle against grief and inner pain. Loneliness, helplessness, despair and grief, vague feelings of anxiety and repressed anger, and especially predominant indescribable fear had no clear place in the first chapter of his story. Only when writing about the family in which he grew up and his first life experiences during his childhood did the missing puzzle pieces come out, and the causes of his emotional pain became increasingly visible and palpable. The lack of recognition and appreciation in his childhood had made him a workaholic, therefore he lacked warmth and love. As a result, he became a restless adventurer. The striking thing about this story is that the processing of all these problems did not happen in a systematic way. Eventually, he sought help and received it several times, but these were not too effective for him. The great change in his life took place rather spontaneously.

This book is more than just a fascinating story. It allows the reader to see that there is more beyond psychology and that ultimately, life itself is the best therapy.

Emile Koelink



Well, here I am. Can you still remember me? This was featured in a Dutch newspaper.

I was performing for the Dutchmen here. What a show off!
(Text back cover photo)

“Death is a stripping away of all that is not you.

The secret of life is to “die before you die”—and find that there is no death.”

Eckhart Tolle

“It always seems to me that I’m a traveller who’s going somewhere and to some destination. If I say to myself the somewhere and the destination don’t exist at all, that seems well-argued and truthful to me.”

Vincent Van Gogh, Arles, August 6, 1888 (Br. 518)

*My big thanks go out to my friend
Emile Koelink*

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Chapter 1

Child (1944-1959)

1. TILBURG, AMSTERDAM

Let me start from the beginning—August 21, 1944 in Tilburg, Langestraat to be exact. While German soldiers marched through the streets and with the Hunger Winter at the door, I was born as the fourth descendant of the family van den Driesschen who lived in the Langestraat.

I didn't live there long because a year later, we moved to Amsterdam East at the Blasiusstraat where we lived on the first floor above a small house which had a workshop. I remember that one of the first things my parents procured was a piano where they both practiced the Klavarskribo method. With my mother's beautiful soprano voice and my father's tenor, our small living room was transformed to a large opera room where great tragedies were performed.

At that time, there was always great hunger and poverty at home. To be able to get dinner, I had to pick up old newspapers with my older brother who was six years old. We carried them on a homemade cart with ball bearings as wheels underneath. Sometimes when it was very cold, we were treated to some hot chocolate at the end of the day. My brother and I went with our loaded cart to the uncouth peasant who laid everything on a massive scale and gave us 2 to 3 cents per pound. I remember my brother once laid a brick in between the stack of papers so we got an extra kilo of payment. Thank God this man never caught us but then, it made a big impression on me.

My father was a father without a father. So, he never took me to the park to feed the ducks and never walked or played with me. He was a frozen man who had a heart of stone with no love to give. He kept his despair, pain, shame, and sorrow hidden behind a rigid mask. Because we didn't have money, we never got toys as children. What we had instead was a carpet beater that was hung on the wall in case one of

the children had done something that didn't suit him. Yes, he made use of it but more often, he simply used his heavy hand.

Life as a little boy was not fun for me. I was an unhappy child. I cannot express it differently. I was like the Jews in the concentration camps who were cheerfully into music. My inner nature was cheerful but if anyone out there ever rubbed salt and pepper on me, the joy faded quickly. Every day, I saw my mother attend to her concerns about money and to what we had to eat that day. My father often came home drunk with liverwurst under his arm which we, if we were lucky, could get a piece of. I would see him huddled on the stairs crying with such a large piece of liverwurst in his hands. Why he was crying, I didn't know. My father was disappointed about how his life was. He really wanted to be an opera singer. Very often, the family was out of money because he had no job and no benefits. My wardrobe consisted mainly of donations from the church. Also, my shoes were "freebies" that never fit me well. The fruit that we got were "hideaways", the ones with rotten spots which the greengrocer gave us for free.

My father was almost always at home and sang many songs of Mario Lanza, Joseph Schmidt, Caruso, or that one song:

"...both stop staring at the beach, black and brown together hand in hand, and the wind plays with her black hair, they are closely related through the marriage bond, take, take, you cannot come, I have to leave you, I remain yours faithfully, my black woman, you and your heart of gold."

Sometimes I was asked by the neighbor from downstairs, Uncle Fons, to go with him because he had an old car that needed to be repaired. Uncle Fons was a good man who always made jokes. One time, he gave me what he called "goat's eggs". He told me that I had to wait until they hatched. The eggs were under my pillow for weeks until I realized that they were made of plaster. Another time, he bought a large machine that could repair old bicycle tires. As a child, the way it worked was very logical but I never saw them rolling.

I grew up in East Amsterdam, near the Jordan, in the midst of all the Jewish people who managed to survive the war. Every week, the organ grinder came by with his organ and his truck on which he stood to collect money. I often ran out when he came and once, I got lost by

following him because I was enchanted by his music. Because we didn't have money, we never went out, let alone go on vacation. Sometimes, I got a postcard from a friend from school and wondered what Germany or Callantsoog was, how the sea looked like, and why the sea wasn't flooded. I wasn't jealous but I just wanted to know and experience them. In my mind, I just dreamed of the tensions at home and at school. My mind was in distant lands and far away from the carpet beater and the ruler. I was away from priest Gedulfus and Mr. van Kooten who lifted my shorts and hit my buttocks.

My grandfather from my mother's side lived with us. Every week, he sat down at the kitchen table and shredded old newspapers into pieces with his penknife. Then, he laced sheets on a string which we used as toilet paper. I didn't know then that we could simply buy toilet paper from the shop. If my mother had to do errands or go somewhere, my grandfather watched over me. I remember when my mother came home once and she saw me in the kitchen sitting semi-unconscious on the lap of my grandfather. My mother was shocked and in a wild panic, threw all the windows open and shouted angrily at my grandfather. The only thing I recall was I drank a big glass of milk really quickly. Many years later, my mother told me about this. My grandfather placed a pan of milk on the stove and forgot to put the fire out. Whether this was the whole truth, I do not know.

My life at that time was dominated by my authoritarian father. It seemed like I wasn't there. The other children's pictures were taken but never mine. What was I there for? With all the fears and uncertainty around me, I started to become quite rebellious and thought that this couldn't be the meaning of life. I saw the difference with other children and their parents and felt extra unhappy. It got me to dream and fantasize, but it also led to resistance. I was very concerned of how things were at this point.

2. RUYSCHSTRAAT

When I was ten, we moved from Blasiusstraat to Ruyschstraat which was two blocks away. It was an apartment on the second floor above a laundry shop. Everything was on credit at that time and I had to

arrange everything. Free bruised fruits and left-over pastries were now in abundance because my brother worked at a greengrocer on the same street and I worked at the bakery.

These jobs kept the family going and took care of the extras in the house. I was often sent to the grocery store with two notes. On one was a list of things to buy and on the other was a request for the items to be put on credit again. It always embarrassed me to death. I had difficulty paying the outstanding bills. If I failed there, there was always some other grocer or greengrocer around and then the same song would start again.

My father was at home a lot and when he wasn't, he was in the pub or with his pigeons. Sometimes when we had nothing to eat, we feasted on these tiny birds' eggs. There was always a potluck so I often had to settle for sprouts pushed down my throat. I felt awful and I had to puke. During dinner, it was always like this—elbows on the table, sit up, shut up and eat everything, and only leave the table with his permission. Because of these unpleasant memories of being forced to sit at the table, I always hated eating at the table. It had become a kind of punishment for me. Father always cut the meat and as head of the family, he obviously got the biggest and most delicious piece of meat. After dinner, the children had to clear the table and wash the dishes. We would lick the chocolate custard off the plates.

My father had occasional work. One time, he sold vacuum cleaners and insurance. Other times, he would be wearing a white coat in a grocery store. Then, he told us of how he proudly displayed a large batch of smoked sausages on a table for 99 cents each which people grabbed at. The last smoked sausage which remained because it was damaged he was allowed to take home. At home, he still used his heavy hand to maintain his authority. In this way, he kept us small, even smaller than we were as a child. Sometimes, uncle John took me to a playground or the Salvation Army where they showed pictures of a magic lantern and on occasion, a film of Laurel and Hardy. He paid an older man 10 cents at the door and for a while, I was immersed in a world of enchantment and magic. This so called Uncle John, was the best. When my dad found out that he took care of me occasionally, he became furious and forbade our friendship.

The last time I saw Uncle John was in a hospital. He had gotten TBC and I could only say hello to him from behind a glass screen. I brought a bag of oranges for him that time. After that, I never saw him again. I still think back to that time of love, friendship, and trust in the goodness of man. At school, my grades were bad except for writing stories. I often got a ten or sometimes a ten plus there.

At one point, my father wanted to swap Amsterdam for a town called Bussum. The neighbors laughed at our plans when they heard it because they thought we wouldn't succeed. My grandfather had become very demented and it was so bad that the family decided to bring him to a retirement home. Soon, a place was found for him somewhere near the zoo called Artis. In the beginning, we often visited him. Later on, I was often the only one who visited him. The following week, I borrowed ten dollars from him and he never asked me to repay it because he forgot about it. The next week, I sat with him in the garden on a bench and waited until he pulled out a tenner from his old wallet. That was his pocket money from the home. I hated to cheat my grandfather but I also knew that my mother was waiting for me at home as she had no money to buy food. One evening, the doorbell rang and my grandfather with a bloodied face was at the door. He had run away from the home and had fallen many times along the way. That sight truly shocked me. A few hours later, we returned him to the home which was filled with the sad, dark smoke of cigars and pipe tobacco. Shortly thereafter, he passed away. Personally, I couldn't go to the funeral. I wasn't sure what caused his death. However, I was left with an enormous guilt because of all the begging and because I abused his forgetfulness. This guilt always haunted me and only much later did I relive and process it through group therapy.

Meanwhile, our family was growing. When my mother was about to give birth, I was sent to the streets to play. When the stork left, I was allowed to see the newest member of the family. I remember that my first reaction was, "It's like a monkey!" We were seven from that day onwards. Actually, we were eight if I counted my sister who was born before me during the war. Unfortunately, she died from a form of bronchitis or pneumonia for which there were no medicines at that time. Later on, I

learned that they also feared for my life as I once became very ill during the war.

The worst experience of my childhood was yet to come. I was about 10 years old and we still lived in the Ruyschstraat. The pavement where my sister and I played tag or blind man with the neighborhood children was cracked. We were about five. There was a boy and my friend from the Zwammerdamstraat whom I was secretly in love with. I remember that one of us had a licorice lace which we divided amongst ourselves before we started the game. The boy who lived downstairs did not participate because he enjoyed playing with the loose stones which were scattered all over the pavement. He made a structure using loose bricks and paving stones. My girlfriend kicked against it during our game by accident. The boy got angry and gave her a huge push so she fell back and hit her head on the street. Just then, a truck came around the corner and drove over her. In a fraction of a second, something terrible happened. There was panic everywhere—people screamed and children shrieked. The shock that this triggered in me was enormous. I saw my friend lying on the street on her back, her arms outstretched, and holding a piece of licorice lace with one hand. I ran down the street to her house and rang the bell. I told her mother what happened. Her mother ran after me to the scene of the accident where at that time, the ambulance had arrived and a crowd had formed. I heard her mother's cries and screams. The officers did not leave her there. I couldn't get any closer. Moments later, the police came to our house and the police asked me and my sister to tell them exactly what had happened. Still in great shock, I re-enacted what had happened. I played the boy from downstairs and my sister, my girlfriend. I did what I saw my neighbor do and gave my sister a big push. I was so upset and confused. It felt as if I was the one who pushed my girlfriend. What confused me even more was when the sisters of the boy shouted that I had lied to the police. They did this for a number of days. I began to feel responsible for this terrible event. A few days later, I saw her mother coming back from the funeral. She stumbled and was supported by two relatives. I happened to be standing outside. She walked right past me without saying anything. For me, it felt as if she reproached me. To stop this violent confusion and guilt and also put an end to the

anger and pain, I pushed the whole event and this experience into my subconscious. My mandolin, which I got from our neighbor and which I loved playing, was stored in the closet because I didn't feel like playing it. I no longer went to school. I didn't want to know anymore where peat or coal underground layers were found or how the multiplication table was. I wanted to know why life was how it was and why it could be so cruel. From that time, the child had died in me. I couldn't laugh. I had become a little old man. Yes, an old man, like my grandfather.

3. BUSSUM

In the mid-50s, we moved from Amsterdam to Bussum. We settled at the Herenstraat first and later on, the Boslaan. In the center of Bussum was an old white church building called Studio Irene which housed the first television studio in the Netherlands. At that time, Dorus was a great character with his sketches and songs like *Make Sure You Get Your Information* and *There Live Two Moths*. Tom Manders, the artist who played Dorus, was effective in playing the character. Dorus was created for the bum, freedom, authenticity, and the prankster who had no concern for the world. He was really funny. Maybe I had secretly wished that my father had been a genius in all his ordinariness. Dorus hit just the right chords in me. I recognized so much in him. I didn't see him as a figure or character but as a human being. He was my idol. He meant so much to me that I couldn't imagine him not being in my future.

The first time I saw Dorus in person was in the streets of Bussum when he was on his way to the studio in his coughing fit of four wheels. I saw him regularly when he was taping an episode somewhere in Bussum for his television show. Also, in Gooi and Eemlander, the newspaper where I worked, they published pictures of him and the photos that were not used for the newspaper I often took home and hung in my bedroom. With a wig, moustache, eyeglasses, and a bowler hat on, I imitated Dorus secretly in front of the mirror. One day, I decided to contact Tom Manders to ask if I could play a small part in his show. From the editor of the newspaper, I got the address where Mr. Manders lived at the time. It was an address somewhere in Blaricum. I took the plunge and rode a bicycle there. When I arrived at the address, I stood before a large, white

villa. Through the large window, I saw a huge white TV stand which was very unusual at that time. I rang the bell but nobody answered. Apparently no one was home. When I walked away disappointed, a little boy came running and asked why I came. When I told him what my intention was, he gave me the phone number of his father. Because we had no phone, I waited for an opportune time to use the phone at the newspaper.

“May I speak with Mr. Manders?”

“Mr. Manders, I’ve seen you on television and read the reviews in the newspaper which were not so good. I have a good idea. I’d like to play the small Dorus with you on television. Now, I want to ask if I can make an appointment with you.”

“In the next shot? The studio? An hour before the start? Of course! Thank you, Mr. Manders. Have a nice day.”

I wanted to tell everyone how happy I was with this invitation but I couldn’t tell anyone. At least not my father. He would have declared me insane and forbid me to go to the studio. So, I kept the invitation to myself. On that day, I stood in front of the building of the television studio and walked inside. Soon, I was stopped by the doorman. I told him that I was invited by Mr. Manders. He asked for my name and looked for it on a list that lay before him. However, I wasn’t on that list. I turned pale with fright when he asked me to come with him. I followed him without knowing where to go until I walked into a dressing room. Suddenly, I was face to face with a strange man in a shirt and trousers. Only when I saw him up close did I see that it was Mr. Tom Manders himself. He was nothing like Dorus. He told the doorman that it was good and that I should go up to the studio and find a place to sit. There, I sat with some strange people on a pedestal behind a small balustrade in the backdrop of Saint Germain des Pres, a kind of French nightclub.

The whole show lasted for about one hour. When it was over, I heard some shouts. Apparently something went wrong. Personally, I didn’t notice anything. At that time, I was looking for a chance to speak to Dorus and ask how he was. I pushed through the crowd that stood around him and looked him straight in the eye. I don’t remember what I said but I heard him say, “Go to the Crown in Amsterdam because that’s

where we always rehearse.” I wanted to ask “Where is it and when?” but Dorus had no time to tell me any details. Afterwards, I walked back home to my parents who still knew nothing. Meanwhile, I sat with a major problem. I had to tell my father that Dorus, or Mr. Manders, made an appointment for me to go to the Crown in Amsterdam. I just didn’t know when and how.

It took me days before I had the courage to tell him. When I thought I had found the right time and courage to tell him, it was actually not the right one. I was told what I expected—that I was stupid, I wasn’t using my head, and I was a terrible dreamer. I took it out of my head quickly. He made it worse for me by telling me that we were emigrating to Australia in a few months and that all of my dreams would be over forever. I was beaten with great astonishment and as so often, I was afraid to say anything. I felt helpless, angry, and so sad. I saw my career going to the dogs at the television in one fell swoop. Everything would be taken from me and I had to swallow it all. I still called Mr. Manders at the Crown to tell him that I couldn’t come because we were going to emigrate to Australia. I don’t remember what he told me because at that moment, my heart cried a million tears and my hatred for my father was more than ever before. I didn’t want to live at home. I wanted to get away from all that misery, a father who was so cruel, and a mother who was too weak to go against it all and fight for me. I actually ran away from home one night. I spent the night with my elder sister and her boyfriend. However, the next day I was sent back home.

Several months passed. Everything was organized for our big trip to Australia. My oldest brother was then in service and didn’t go through all of that. It was the same for my oldest sister because she had no contact with home. However, my other two sisters Lilly, who was six years younger than me, and Loes, eighteen months older than me, came along. Everything gained momentum. Medical examinations were carried out at the hospital, the furniture was sold, and what was left was stored in a large box. The government paid for our trip so we couldn’t bring that much baggage. For the rigorous medical examinations, we had to be 100 percent healthy. Nearly one of my sisters was disapproved because of a spot in her eye. I also remember the nerves and the great outburst of my

father when the doctor asked my father why I was so tense. I felt like a cow ready for slaughtering. Inside, I was crying. Why did we have to leave especially at the time when I made many dear friends and where a stage and an audience were ready for me? Well, it was not to be. In the port of Rotterdam, a boat was waiting for us named *The Sibajak*.

Yes, I left a lot behind and not all were beautiful memories. The time we spent in Bussum was very traumatic. At school, they wouldn't talk to me and I was thus put in a separate class for difficult children. It was a Catholic school where the priest walked around with a ruler to give a big tap on your fingers if you were naughty. I had the urge to be famous as a writer or artist and if I was asked what I wanted to be, I always said "actor". I had already starred in a drama which was staged in the big theater Spant in Bussum, and that experience was worth repeating. I saw and heard people laugh because of my acting. At home, there was an indescribable excitement at our house because of that. I started writing little plays on my old typewriter. However, my father didn't accept everything I did. I couldn't dream. I was nothing. I was just not there. In many ways, he tried to oppress and humiliate me. However, his adversities did not stop me from doing a radio broadcast for KRO and AVRO. I was doing plays and sang in the children's choir without my father knowing. Because the tapings took place in Hilversum and I had no bike, I had to walk there. For the few times I got a few pennies from my mother, I used them to ride a bus to Hilversum.

In Bussum, everything had to be done secretly. I was a child that was no good, stubborn, and unruly according to my father. Besides this suffocating atmosphere at home, there was something that would affect my life so negatively. It was one of those traumas where I stepped out of shame and sorrow but also far away from anger, frustration, and outwardly expressed fear, great fear. No counsel at school knew me. Nobody knew what was really wrong with me. I had fallen prey to men around me who saw me only as a pretty boy. I lived in a loveless home with unloving parents and desperately sought for warmth and love, so I was an easy prey for figures that lurked on that weakness.

It started one afternoon after school. I found a job as a baggage carrier for a passenger van. I was 12 or 13 years old then. The driver of the bus

always found somewhere secluded to park so that I couldn't do anything and then he began to perform certain acts. Out of shame, the fear of rejection, and violence, I left everything and this happened repeatedly.

It was the first confrontation with an environment that I did not want as an innocent child as I didn't know how to decide on things. At that time, I didn't know what I should do. There was also a boarder in our house, a certain Henk, who for many nights secretly ran upstairs to my room. He sat next to me in bed and then began to "play" with me and stroke his stiff stick until he came. Out of fear, I said nothing. I let this all happen partly out of fear that my father would blame me. I also didn't dare to say anything because I knew if our boarder left, we would have less money and therefore have more problems in the family. This scene repeated itself time and time again. When I think back, I can still smell the stench of alcohol and hear his heavy breathing.

If this was not enough, I also had to deal with my brother. At that time, he was in the service and came home only on weekends. I had to share my attic room and bed with him because my father used his room for his pigeons. It happened again, this time with my own brother. I was totally confused and beaten by stupidity. Who and what was he? I wanted a big brother with whom I could go and discover the world with and one who would protect me if it were needed. However, I was a victim of his sick mind. I developed a subsequent phobia of men. Now, even with my own son and daughter, I have trouble cuddling them as I am scared that it would happen to them. I fled into my fantasies and dreams to which my father uncomprehendingly responded to with even tougher and tougher sanctions. Instead of love and attention which I craved for, I was brutally raped and abused by others. At school, they wondered what was wrong with me. No one knew the answer. Only I did. I kept silent and separated myself in my own fantasy world of theater and song and drama writing. One night, when Henk came to my room once again, my mother was awake. The next day, Henk's parents were called by my father and mother to pay them a visit. I was not allowed to be there and I was told to play in the garden. From a distance, I saw them busy talking until they stood up. Then, when they had left, I was called in and I went inside. I didn't know what had happened. They said that everything

was my fault. I was called a pervert and was told that this should never happen again. The sexual abuse of my brother and the driver of the van I kept quiet. After all, it would make no sense to tell to a father who didn't believe me. From that day on, my father became even more distrustful of me. At that time, I naturally had redder lips and my father suspected me of using red lipstick. Every time he suspected something, he gave me a white handkerchief to rub my lips to see if I wore lipstick or not, which of course was never the case. For a long time, I kept silent about all these things, even in therapy. I didn't want to shame anyone, especially my brother. Several years ago, he asked me if it was because of him that my life had become dramatic and that he had lost my friendship. I then replied, "Well, no," while in all honesty, I meant yes.

Chapter 2

Australia (1959-1974)

4. THE SIBAJAK

It was the last trip of this great liner before its demolition. In the harbor, we first had to report to the immigration service. Then, we had to go through customs with our suitcases. In my case, the only things of value that I brought were my writings, a wig, some pictures, and a single of plus a poster of the Dorus. I had my pants clogged up with some love letters from my last girlfriend from Bussum. As I looked down on the quay, I saw a man in his old coat wearing a bowler hat like Dorus'. He sat in his coughing fit of four wheels with a little boy who was dressed exactly like him. I saw them laugh and sing a song that I couldn't hear because the gangplank was being pulled up with a lot of noise. The anchor was lifted, the ropes were untied, and slowly, we drifted to sea with 1,500 men and women aboard. The journey had begun. It was a journey of 10 weeks which would bring us to strange, distant lands.

Our ship rattled on all sides and with a strong wind, pieces of rust flew by our ears. The ship went on course first to Southampton in England, then Curacao, Panama, and Tahiti. It was pleasant in Papeete, Tahiti with the beauty and joy of the people of that island. There, my eyes and heart were opened. The music, the pigs roaming the streets, the beautiful women decorated with flowers, and the white beaches with palm trees fascinated me. My pain and sorrow disappeared in one fell swoop. I had found my paradise and never wanted to get out of there. While I wandered about the island, I got so lost in thought that I forgot the time. A patrol car of the military police found me and brought me back to the ship where everybody was waiting for me. Again we sailed, surrounded by flying fish which were attracted by the waste that was thrown overboard. Sometimes, there popped up a big whale. I often helped the crew to pile some crates under the hold of the ship in exchange for a laced drink. I had to pile up the crates next to big lead coffins that were there in case someone died along the way.

I often sat by myself on the ship in a place where no one could find me. It was a place just for me. From there, I peered into the distance to the horizon. The Netherlands had to be somewhere. In my pocket were a few love letters that I had saved. One day, I tore them into small pieces and threw them into the wind. Occasionally, seagulls circled above the ship. It was a sign that we were close to land. Sometimes, we sailed for fourteen straight days without seeing land. Besides, it was not a luxury trip because our trip was paid for by the state, some pocket money included. We ate at long tables at the bottom of the ship. There were also the passengers who had paid for their trip and ate somewhere else. My parents stayed in a cabin while I was in a dorm with many others. My father was often found in the large lounge on the upper deck.

At one point, we crossed the equator. In addition, all passengers, including those who had sailed for the first time, were baptized symbolically. I also didn't escape this. I made a joke by dressing myself as a woman. I borrowed a bikini from my sister and filled the upper parts with two lemons and apples, I think. I also wore my wig. Hundreds of passengers watched this spectacle. When it was my turn, everyone gazed on such a beautiful young woman. However, just at the moment when all eyes were on me, I removed the upper part of the bikini and I stood there with no top and no breasts. First, there was great confusion but when I took off my wig, they saw that I was a boy. The people laughed and clapped profusely. The captain loved it and put his personal signature on my diploma.

I found life aboard such a large ship beautiful. There was always something to see or do. Especially sailing through the Panama Canal made a big impression on me. Every time the ship was lifted and then dropped back down in the locks, it was a sensational experience. Sometimes, we sailed so close to the edge of the canal that I could almost pick the oranges from the trees. When we sailed by Wellington, New Zealand, we had no interest in that city because our minds were already fixed on our final destination, Australia. Three days before we were to dock in Australia, we encountered a huge storm. The ship was in great distress and it trembled and shook on all sides. Anything loose flew through the air. The Indonesian crew panicked and my mother screamed

when the suitcases were hurled in the cabin. The ship had become almost unmanageable. Hundreds of plates flew and everywhere, you could hear the tinkle of shards. I loved it all and didn't realize at the time that we were about to drown. Later on, we heard about the danger we had been through. The newspapers were full of our stories. Fortunately, the storm subsided again and finally, after waiting 10 long weeks, we saw the coast of Australia looming before us.

5. ARRIVAL IN AUSTRALIA

When we arrived at the harbor and went off deck, we were immediately settled in a camp with large barracks. It was a dreary atmosphere. Our accommodation consisted of a room for the four of us with only a few beds in it. For our daily meal, we had to stand in queue. The food was in fact not edible. Was this the promised land? At night, we heard the eerie sounds of wildlife and we were warned of spiders and snakes. Our room could have small and big spiders which were the most dangerous, they said. The redbacks hid under manhole covers and toilet seats. It was therefore advisable to lift the toilet seat before you sat down. Thank God that we left after a few weeks for our new home. It was the home of a single Dutchman, Mr. Sikman, a stickler with a peasant accent that I could not understand sometimes. In exchange for caring, we could live with him. One day, my sister and I were playing around and my sister flew through the mesh of the back door towards the garden. This was for him the last straw. We had to look for another house. Fortunately, we quickly found a new home, our first real home in Australia. Now, our lives in Aussieland could really start.

It was an old, isolated house with many rooms and it had a very large garden. The bathroom, laundry room, and shower were in the midst of orange, peach, and lemon trees. I felt like Adam in paradise with all those fruits that hung for the picking. However, it wasn't really paradise. My father, who didn't understand a word of English and could only speak "yes", "no", and "good morning", couldn't find work at the supermarket which was what he wanted. Eventually, he found a job in a clay factory where he had to lug heavy sewer pipes all day. I found myself working in a dry cleaning shop as a "topper". I had to fold the upper part of the

trousers and then press it with a small press machine. The warm steam had a stench of chemicals which made me sick to my stomach. I had to work on Saturdays where I was tasked to climb into the drum and clean the inside and outside of the huge boiler. In addition, I also had a job in a movie theater where I sold chocolate, popcorn, and ice cream to the moviegoers. All the money I earned I gave to my parents. That was how it always was in our family. Each child gave the money he or she earned and got a little pocket money in return. My sister found a job at the Arnott's biscuit factory. My other sister went to school. My mother was a cleaner at a family doctor's clinic.

One day, I wanted to put some cheer into the atmosphere. With the same bikini and wig, I dressed up in the bathroom and went back to the factory among the other working men and women. My boss didn't appreciate this practical joke and called me to his office where he scolded me and called me a lazy bastard. I didn't even know what that meant at the time. When I found out what it meant, I still couldn't understand why he said that when I worked day and night. I was fired within a week and had to look for another job. It was my first bad experience in the land of hope and glory where we killed the oppressive heat, mosquitoes, and the numerous flies which continuously used our bodies as a landing site.

The image that I had of Australia—a vast land full of beauty and happiness and a land of opportunity—changed after a few weeks. I felt homesick and sad. I wanted to return to the Netherlands and began to dream of Dorus and be on the radio and television again. I, a boy of only fifteen years, had been forced to become a working machine by my father. I didn't have any freedom or leeway. I had a very small room for myself with pictures of Dorus on the wall. I had a book in which I wrote stories and poems. The pipes that ran through my room I had painted red with a marker. I created my own little world where I dreamt of happiness and a career as an artist in the Netherlands. Strangely enough, I also missed my brother who had remained in the Netherlands because he was still employed and my eldest sister who didn't even know where we were. I loved the Netherlands, Amsterdam, Bussum, Hilversum, the radio eveningshow called “de Bonte Avond Trein”, the comedy couple

Snip and Snap, and the Johnny Jordan and Willy Alberti with all their songs.

That time in the Netherlands was all so ordinary and fun. Slowly, I began to make plans to return to the Netherlands. Meanwhile, I found work again, this time at a large company that repaired refrigerators and other appliances. I wore blue overalls and gloves as I lugged the equipment from one place to another. One day, I ran so hard that I lost my balance and caused a brand new refrigerator to land on its face on the stone floor. The fridge was repaired with a little beating and it was patched up again. They never took it against me. Sometimes, my colleagues joked with me and said, "*Reckon you get it?*" which means "Do you think you can?" and then I asked, "*What?*" and then they replied, "*Shit out of a rockin' horse*". They made fun of me. That was Australian humor among workmen. I didn't feel totally at home but anything was better than pressing trousers.

6. ACHILA LAURO

I had learned that the next day, an Italian ship named "Achila Lauro" would moor in the port of Adelaide and that it would sail to the Netherlands the same night. This was my chance. Driven by the wind, I quickly made my plan as a stowaway. From the cookie jar in the kitchen, I took the money I earned. I pulled on my blue overalls and took the train to the port. As a farewell, I bought a big cake with orange icing on it. I broke off some pieces to eat and kept the rest under my clothes. That night, I slept on the cement floor of a small abandoned stone building at the harbor. In the middle of the night, I woke up. I looked through the window and saw a white veil hovering over the water. I couldn't sleep as I was so afraid. I didn't dare to look outside again. I was glad when the sun broke through and it was morning. Within hours, the boat would moor in the port. First, I went to the small post office at the port and from there, I sent my parents a telegram in which I told them that I had gone back to the Netherlands.

After a long wait but just in time, out of nowhere came a huge ship that entered the small harbor. It was gleaming in the sun, was as white as white can be, had two blue stripes on the side, and had two chimneys

on it. It was the Achila Lauro. My intention was to go aboard with my blue overalls so one would think that I was part of the staff. The gangway was set down and as soon as I could, I slipped aboard. Once on board and with half a cake under my overalls, I locked myself in the bathroom. Occasionally, I made a quick lap around the deck and then slipped somewhere else quickly like a toilet where I stayed for a few hours. The ship was to leave at eight o'clock that evening. With a pounding heart as I was afraid of being caught, I waited. Sometimes, I was startled by someone who rattled my door. I almost shit it my pants from fear. The trick with the overalls worked well. Well, I had the fear that one of the passengers would ask me something and that I wouldn't know what to answer. When the hour of departure had arrived, I went up to the deck and in between the passengers, I watched how the gangway was secured, how the ropes were loosened, and how the anchor was hoisted. I had witnessed this scene many times but this time, it was different.

Finally, the ship sailed off from the wharf. I stood there as a stowaway without a passport or valid papers amidst all that partying, swaying and crying people, and garlands. The song *Auld Lang Syne* served as a farewell song and was blasted through the megaphones. For me, there were no garlands, no waving people, no goodbyes, but no tears and just pure relief that the trip had finally begun. I was sailing away from my father, away from the past, and back to the Netherlands, my career, Dorus, my older sister, my friends, and my girlfriend. Slowly, the ship sailed out of the harbor. The people who were standing on the dock became smaller and smaller. Ultimately, the port was a dot and soon after that, there was nothing to see at all. The ship danced on the waves of the great sea and my heart danced, too. No one realized that I had come on board and I knew that once at sea, outside territorial waters, no one could send me back to Australia. That evening, I decided to confess. However, where could I do it and by whom? I learned that a priest was always on board to do church services for the passengers. I decided to find him and tell him what I had done and what my intention was. That same evening, I had a conversation with him. Breathless, he sat listening with eyes of disbelief. I can't remember that conversation in detail. I just remember that he told me that the captain mentioned that the ship would dock in

Perth, Western Australia and not Europe as I thought. This meant that the ship would still remain in territorial waters and I would be sent back. The captain, an Italian, was a very kind man with a broad smile on his mouth. He heard my story and wasn't angry. After some chatting with the priest, I was given a wonderful large cabin above deck. Meanwhile, I had taken off my suit and I wore long pants and a shirt. It was all I had on me. That same evening, they brought me some hot food and dessert. They told me that the next day, I could eat at the table together with the captain and his officers. I almost started to feel like a little king. I was allowed to roam freely and was the talk of the day for the passengers. There were many Dutch people on board who gave me bottles of soft drinks, ice cream, and sometimes a little change. With a weeping heart, I experienced my last days on board the ship. The beautiful Italian ship looked like a palace on the water. There in the distance loomed Perth, my final destination, while the ship would sail across the Great Sea and through the Suez Canal without me and then on to Italy where a train could be taken to the Netherlands which terminates at the Central Station in Amsterdam.

The day before the ship would sail into the harbor, they locked the door of my cabin to make sure that I would stay hidden. During the day, I was offered bottles of water by some passengers through the little window that was open. I was a stowaway but nobody treated me so. They all lived with me, especially those last days. At about eight o'clock in the evening, when all the new passengers were already on board, the door of my cabin was finally opened and an officer escorted me to the big ramp where I walked down as the last passenger. It was like I was on my way to the guillotine, not knowing what was hanging over my head. Behind me, I heard the passengers still yelling and screaming. I turned around and saw all those people standing along the railing. With tears in my eyes and legs like lead, I set foot ashore. For another time, I looked at all the people on the ship and I saw that the gangway was secured, the ropes were cast off, and the anchor was hoisted. The ship sailed further and further away from my heart. I said goodbye to my career, Dorus, friends, sister, brother, and the lovely people on board. Thanks again, Mr. Captain. I unwittingly ended up somewhere between the Netherlands

and Australia since the day that I left the port of Rotterdam with the Sibajak. I felt tears coming and I felt so much grief and anger. I felt lonely, misunderstood, and abandoned. While I wiped away my tears, I thought this was not God had intended for me.

7. BACK TO ADELAIDE

My parents were informed by telex about what I had been up to and had already arranged a trip to Adelaide for me. Down the ramp, I was met by a friendly man from the shipping company. Together, we stood on the dock and then he took me to his house. I spent the night there. The next night, I would travel from Perth to Adelaide, which was separated by 4,000 kilometers of desert plains. At Adelaide, my parents would be waiting at the station for me. The trip would take two to three days. On the day of departure, we went to a department store to buy clothes because I still wore the same clothes. I got myself a t-shirt which was bright orange. Because of the heat, I didn't need more than that. After some dinner and a wonderful tour of the beautiful parks around Perth, it was time. On the platform, I thanked the man from the shipping company and I promised him that I would never get off the road. Slowly, the train was in motion. It was such a long journey but a memorable one, of course. By spending two days sleeping and eating on board, you'll realize how big Australia is. I had a private booth which I could transform into a bedroom in the evening.

During the day, I peered through the windows and saw many villages and towns pass before me. After about 400 miles, we passed the old gold mining town of Kalgoorlie, the last stop before the desert. The story goes that it was built to provide the necessary water for the town. A giant water pipeline was constructed from Perth to Kalgoorlie. The engineer who was in charge of its conception and execution waited until it was finished. When the water didn't come through, he thought he had made the wrong calculations and therefore committed suicide. The next day, with some delay, the water came from Perth. Peering out the window, for the first time I saw wild kangaroos and an Aboriginal who was in his walkabout. This was an old custom among the Aborigines. One member

of the group undergoes a test of maturity. He is left alone in the desert sometimes for weeks. He must keep up with what the desert has to offer.

When the train arrived at Adelaide, I saw that my father and mother were indeed waiting for me. They immediately saw me when I got off the train as I had that bright orange t-shirt on. It was a strange sight for them. The reception was far from cordial. Not a word was exchanged. The icy silence made me feel anger and pain. Once I got home, I went to my room and saw that everything I loved was destroyed. The last colored photos of Dorus that I had been given as a farewell gift by the editors of the newspaper were ripped from the wall. Also, the book with my first plays and poems was gone. I stopped dreaming and faced reality. My dreams were wiped out just like that. What happened to me was terrible. My hatred towards my father was greater than ever now that the last bit of resistance in me was broken. I stayed in my room for days with the door locked while my father was on the other side of the door shouting "Open up!", but I refused. I lived in a haze and felt beaten by stupidity. I had no fight left. I wanted nothing more. I couldn't move.

After a few days, I returned to my job at the refrigerator repair shop. A few months later, I changed jobs and went to work in a hardware shop as a seller. Being dressed in a mouse gray duster and working with screws, nails, and fittings wasn't for me. Moreover, my job as chocolate and ice cream vendor in the cinema started to get boring. My pen, I no longer touched. In the meantime, my father was still lugging pipes and my mother kept cleaning at home and among strangers. My sister was still working in the biscuit factory and my youngest sister went to school. One day, my sister came home with the announcement that she had been chosen to be a supervisor because she was Dutch and knew the spiced flavors of their biscuits well. Our whole family seemed to flourish again. It reminded me of Amsterdam specifically our Aunt Mina who worked on the assembly line at the Maggi factory and Mina was promoted to overseer or main line supervisor. Even that made a huge impression on our whole family. And so, life went on.

On the trees still hung the tastiest and juiciest oranges, mandarins, and peaches which were too much to eat. However, the spiders were still everywhere and the flies and mosquitoes continued to bother us.

Nothing had changed but there was some nostalgia in the air. According to my parents, there was nothing for us in Australia and increasingly, I heard vague comments and veiled allusions about going back to the Netherlands.

At that time, I made two attempts to go to the Netherlands or leave the house. One time, I went into the harbor and went aboard a Dutch freighter but I was immediately found and put ashore again. The second time, I took the train to Melbourne which was about 500 miles to the east and tried to find work. However, they didn't trust me because of my age and again, I was returned home.

I found a new part-time job as an assistant in one of the first ice cream parlors in Henley Street in South Australia. They sold homemade ice cream made with their secret recipe. It was a very good ice cream and every day, people stood in long lines at the store. It was a gold mine and within two years, Bruno, the owner of the store, was able to buy a house in Adelaide. He was the first colored person to do that and it was an achievement as people of color weren't fully accepted in Australia at that time. I tried to find out what the secret recipe was. Repeatedly, I walked to the toilet while he was making his ice cream. What I found out, I wrote quickly on a piece of toilet paper. So, I found out how he made lemon, chocolate, and cassata ice cream.

One day, on the street I saw a big, old antique car for sale for 5 Australian pounds. It was a 1928 Ford Model T with an open roof. This kind of car was a popular second hand car at that time (1959) in Australia. I was just 15 years old but a driver's license was not a problem. Also, the money was not a problem because I had saved my tips from the ice cream parlor. The problem was how I would bring the thing home and how I would hide it from my parents. Eventually Bruno, my boss, drove the car to my house after we closed the shop. Luckily, my parents were already in bed when I got home. I was so proud of that old car with its big headlamps, the smell of the leather upholstery, and chrome bumpers. When I walked into the house, my parents were awake. Thrilled, I told them that I had a big surprise for the whole family and that they were allowed to see it the next morning. "We hope it's not a dog," they immediately said. That night, I dreamt of myself driving

around in it just like Dorus whom I had seen driving around in his T-Ford in the Netherlands. When it was morning, I gathered the whole family and showed them my newly acquired property. Their response was not the reaction I expected or hoped. Nobody in our family ever sat in it or drove it. I was occasionally alone behind the wheel and turned the crank to start it, and then it would just sputter. On the day of the sale in which I sold it for 5 Australian pounds, there was a void in my heart again. Life went on. I continued selling ice cream and making cappuccinos. Sometimes when I stood behind the counter, we would see my father across the street and walk past my boss. Bruno asked why my father never once came to greet his son. To me, the evasiveness of my father had already become obvious.

8. DEPARTURE OF PARENTS TO THE NETHERLANDS

Meanwhile, the talk of going back to the Netherlands became frequent because my father could not keep up with the hard work and he had difficulty adjusting to the new country and its foreign language and rules. My mother always suffered from the heat and the many flies, mosquitoes and spiders. Also, she hardly spoke a word of English. Finally, there was the money, or rather the lack of it. One morning, my father started telling me that he would go back to the Netherlands together with my mother, my younger sister, and I had to stay behind together with my sister Loes in Australia. He then promised that half of the fare for our return trip would be deposited at the travel agency. The other half would be sent from Holland to Australia as soon as he arrived there. Don't ask me about my reaction to all of this. I had nothing to ask and nothing to say. I was perplexed. I was totally stunned and overwhelmed. In a last burst of resistance, I shouted to my father that I wanted to beat his brown eyes blue. My sister remembered that very well as she found my remark quite funny. The family slowly fell apart.

Meanwhile, my father had made calculations and found that they could return to the Netherlands in a few months. The boat trip was booked and the little that we had possessed from the Netherlands such as the rattan furniture was sold. The large stereo cabinet which he had bought on installment was the only luxury item that my father had

afforded to buy. Luckily, my bike, which was bought on installment, was not sold. However, I had to continue the payments myself. During the last days before their departure, there was a strange silence in our house. Nothing seemed wrong but the tension was enormous. There was no mention of where my sister and I would go. We were told that we would be sleeping the first few nights in a room at the travel agency and that we would then stay in a boarding house. Everything was done in secret and there was an ominous silence in the house which I was sick of. No one was allowed to know anything. I didn't know that the rent was not paid for months. Also, the curtains weren't opened during the day so that no one from the outside could see that there was almost no furniture in the house.

Then came the terrible day of the departure. The same cases which we had brought from Holland were waiting at the front door. When the lady from the agency came, the luggage was quietly loaded onto the car, the door was locked, and the family departed for the port of Adelaide. There was the great luxury ocean liner of Italian origin already waiting for them. The ship was in the same company as the ship which I went aboard as a stowaway. It looked almost the same with its blue stripes and two chimneys. I saw how my father was terrified every time something was announced by loudspeaker. He was afraid that something would happen at the last minute and that the trip could not go on. That fear dominated all his other emotions. Then, he called me and my sister, pulled out his wallet, and gave us five pounds each which was then worth just about 10 euro's. This made an impression because it was the first time I received money from him. The last thing I got from him was a new toothbrush for my fifteenth birthday.

My mother stayed in the background. I always had quite a good relationship with my mother and as a child, I often told her jokes. Like me, she was powerless over my authoritarian father and she couldn't muster the strength to go against him. On the day of departure, there was no sense of time. At a certain point, we had to say goodbye. I got a hug and a kiss from my mother and as always, a firm handshake from my father. That was all. It was the same farewell scene that I had seen so often. What my older sister, who was standing next to me, felt I didn't

know but something happened to me. Something died in me. I was dragged through the water while the ship sailed away and I could still hear the voice of a helpless little boy crying to his mother, "Mommy, Mommy". Once the ship was out of sight, my sister and I went on our way. My sister was dropped off by colleagues from work and I went with the lady of the travel agency where I would remain until a boarding house was found for me.

This house was found quickly. It was the home of a Dutch family with a daughter and three sons. I got a small room and in the evenings, we ate together at the table. Meanwhile, work at the ice cream shop put big pressure on me. I was not functioning properly and Bruno wanted a woman to take charge. He gave me other things to do. He also gave me the occasional tranquilizer for my nerves. However, my tears continued to flow. I still remember the confusion when I came into a salon and I saw Bruno and his wife crying. I thought they were crying because of me and what my father had done. They were crying because a plane from Australia to Italy, where Bruno's father was on, had crashed. His father was killed.

With my sister, I hardly had any contact since the departure of our parents. She shared my anger but not my sadness. She felt that we had great parents. Meanwhile, I had a private talk with the couple from the boarding house about what happened to me. The story was so unbelievable to them that they decided to contact the Dutch embassy. After some research, this confirmed that my parents were indeed on a ship en route to the Netherlands. The embassy invited us for an interview. In that conversation, I was faced with a choice. I could, at the expense of the Dutch state, fly back to Holland or I could work at a hotel in Port Lincoln, a small fishing village some 750 kilometers from Adelaide. The first proposal was more attractive for me. However, the door of the Netherlands was closed to me. Practically speaking, there were strong objections. My parents were not back in Holland yet and I knew nothing of my brother and sister who had remained there. My hatred for my father was so great that I never wanted to see him, let alone live with him under one roof. At the age of fifteen, with or without a job you couldn't live independently in the Netherlands. That's why I chose, amidst all

the uncertainty, the security of food and living and chose to work in the hotel.

9. PORT LINCOLN

After speaking with the hotel owner, I was accepted right away. I left the boarding house and traveled to Port Lincoln to the Boston Hotel. As a shelter, I got a small room behind the hotel, 200 meters from the beach. This room would be my house and home for that period. At the hotel, I got the role of a bartender at the cocktail bar. There were three categories of bars in Australia—the front bar for port workers, the saloon for the middle-class and finally, the luxurious cocktail bar in the lounge which was open to both men and women. The skills of the waiter and bartender I learned here. I learned how to draw beer and get the perfect foam. I also poured out whiskey, mixed cocktails, and served food. I quickly became familiar with the taste of alcoholic drinks such as Drambuie, Benedictine, Tia Maria, and Cherry Heering, a delicious drink with a kind of almond flavor.

In addition to my small salary (£5 per week), I also got some tips and I put this money aside for a “new” old car. Although I wasn’t 16 years old yet, I stepped into the police station one day to take a driving test. I stood at the counter filling out a form containing thirteen questions of which eight had to be correct. At that time you didn’t need a test drive. Half an hour later, I got the license to drive my own car which I had already bought. I stuck a drawing on the dashboard which indicated where the brakes and clutch were and how the gear worked. The claims period lasted less than 10 minutes because the first thing I did was to drive through the gate of the square of the town. Luckily, there wasn’t too much damage. I started practicing on an empty parking lot next to the hotel. I drove around in circles. I had a fancy for old cars—an old Morris, Chevrolet, or Ford. At that time, there were no car inspections and in an emergency, I had to make do with the handbrake and quickly switch back to the lowest gear. At that time, a car was an important accessory in attracting girls. You could go to a drive-in movie theater or just drive around. The car became my passion and a big part of my life. It gave me a place with its own specific aroma of antiquity, its leather seats,

and radio which made life beautiful with songs like *Rubber Ball*, *Tonight You're Mine*, *hTe Lion Sleeps Tonight*, and many others.

At one of the meetings of the Rotary Club, I was asked to sing a song. It would be my first paid gig. The song that I sang was *Mama* by Mario Lanza. Many guests got tears in their eyes during my act and I couldn't understand why. One of the members handed me a check for a few Australian pounds. This check, the visible evidence of recognition, meant so much to me that I didn't cash in but framed it and hung it on the wall. Despite this small success, things didn't go well for me. I didn't feel happy and I didn't know why. Literally and figuratively, I pulled the hair off my head. One evening, I got some broken glass between my fingers and my hand bled. The doctor, who came into the bar daily, examined me as he saw that something was wrong with me. He asked me to come to his office. He gave me medicine to make me calm.

Work was getting busier. I also got more responsibility such as closing the bar, counting stocks, organizing the greenhouse, and turning over the money to the top. Meanwhile, I bought a guitar and kept practicing. I hung LPs on my ceiling with thumbtacks. The album covers were hung on the walls. I dreamt of fame and success on my almost sagging bed. The beach was less than twenty feet from my room and in my free time, I went there often to walk by the bay or swim in the sea. In the evenings, I drove my car and my girlfriend at that time to a drive-in movie theater. I wasn't there for the movie but to discover how a woman looked and felt. Sometimes, we would have a whole bottle of McWilliam's sherry. After the movie, I drove to a hill and we watched the lights of the city. That gave a romantic feel and I hoped to go even further but it didn't happen. Australia still was very Victorian and my Catholic upbringing got in the way.

I was really in love with a girl who worked at the snack bar where I always had my *lime spider*. This was a nice cool drink of soda water with a dash of lime and a scoop of vanilla ice cream on it. She was the most beautiful young woman I knew. She had curly hair and a sweet, pure, and innocent face. Her family was a member of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. I didn't know if it had something to do with my being able to stay with her. We slept together on a mattress in the living

room. It sounds incredible but it's true. She was 15 and I, 16. I was crazy about her. Sometimes, I went with her to the church and sang my heart out for Jesus, Mary, and perhaps also Joseph. It was the first time I came back in a church since we left the Netherlands but it didn't last long. They were so strict—no coffee, no alcohol, no dancing, and so on. I couldn't stand it. Love thus went woefully out. I fell out of love, and for so long, I wouldn't be so.

Meanwhile, I continued to dabble with the chords on my guitar—C, D, G and F. Also, I kept tapping beer and mixed and served cocktails. In the course of time, I had taught myself my own way of serving. As I walked, I danced like I was on a ship on the waves. I swung bottles like a juggler. At one time, I was busy serving a glass of ice cold sherry when I saw one of the women had a dress with a very deep neckline in front and a rear naked back. The sherry fell out of my hand and landed on her bare back. The sherry gushed down her shivering back. I tried to wipe away the sherry with my napkin.

Meanwhile, I had written contact with my eldest sister and her husband in Holland. She sent occasional parcels and money. I also re-established contact with my sister in Adelaide. I even managed to persuade her to work as a waitress at the Boston Hotel. In my Holden Utility with a canopy over it, I drove excitedly to the small airport of Port Lincoln to pick her up. The small DC-3 plane landed and after a joyful reunion, we drove back to the hotel. Also, the contact with my parents was restored and in their letters, they wrote that they wanted us to return to the Netherlands. There had never been serious talk of that. For my sister, as a seventeen year old girl life was difficult. She was increasingly harassed by her employers which pushed her to return to the Netherlands which she eventually did.

I was now working at the Rundell Hotel in Adelaide. I became friends with the bartender who was older than me. He invited me for a weekend at his house that was in the Barroso Valley where the famous wines came from. Innocent as I was, I accepted the invitation and I rode with him through the beautiful countryside to his secluded house which was surrounded by mountains and valleys. I was looking for a father figure and unconsciously, he fulfilled that role for me. He was very nice and

took good care of me but he seemed to have different intentions with me. I was drugged by him and the only thing that I remember was a raw feeling in my anus and that sticky fluid ran out of it. Overwhelmed and still half in shock, I left the house and returned to Adelaide. Because I was scared and didn't understand it, I couldn't handle it. Only in writing this book did I become aware of it. I saw the connection between this incident and the events that would follow.

Meanwhile, I still dreamt of a career as an artist and this "career" got a hesitant start when I got the opportunity to join a cabaret show for the Dutch. With my bowler hat, striped shirt, a moustache, and an old coat, I stood on the stage while in the background was a song of Dorus was playing. The needle got stuck in the record and inadvertently this revealed the biggest joke of the evening. Again, I had just a taste of what it was like to be an artist. My heart was burning with desire for more, much more.

10. ALONE IN AUSTRALIA

On one hand, I was happy that my sister had left. I felt happy even though I was her younger brother because I was a kind of protector. I was now all alone in this vast country where it was difficult to keep to yourself as you could easily get lost in a desert of loneliness and pain and drown in an ocean of tears. Later on, I learned that my sister wanted to jump over the railing of the ship and swim back to me. Thank God she didn't.

I began to travel from Adelaide to Melbourne, Melbourne to Sydney, and Sydney to Brisbane. Very soon, I realized that there was always work for me as a waiter so I didn't need to worry. At that time, I was able to eat well and had money in my pocket to rent a room. Meanwhile, I listened to Johnny O' Keefe and Barry Stanton with their hits. I also listened to a few songs about heartbreak that had titles like *Enid*, *Can I Come Back To You* which was originally dedicated to my first girlfriend at the snack bar at Port Lincoln. It was later adapted easily for future girlfriends, too. There also was *You've Got To Love, Girl* and *Don't You Ever Say No*.

Once I had saved some money, I wrote songs and arranged them for the piano, violin, and other instruments with the help of a professional

arranger. The results looked impressive, just a score of Bach or Beethoven, but whether it sounded good, I wasn't sure of. Anyway, I was proud of myself. Meanwhile, I had also taken singing lessons from a beautiful young lady who, during class, put her hand on my stomach as I had to breathe deeply and sing "*I, A, O*". Sometimes, she even let me walk around with books on my head and I had to simultaneously sing *You Do Something To Me* in order to practice all my vowels. However, I think we both wanted something else because in my imagination that hand sank deeper and deeper.

I kept transferring from one place or city to another, usually by hitchhiking. Then, I went to a truckers' depot and asked the driver if I could ride with him. I usually succeeded because they were only too happy to help and get companionship during those long trips. Sometimes we stopped overnight somewhere in the desert and then loaded hundreds of frozen rabbits which were skewered on long sticks. The distances were large, the days were long, and the dry desert was infinite. Most truck drivers had trouble staying awake and used uppers. I remember I once took such a pill. It gave me a general sense of well-being, just a moment of happiness, especially at sunset or in the morning as the sun rose. These experiences of happiness lasted and I began to occasionally take Dexedrine or methodrine. These kept me more than awake. Because these pills were also used for slimming, you needed to order them from a doctor.

In Sydney, I had a gig as Dorus for a Dutch club. They made a big announcement of this through their posters and newspaper. Expectations were high but the show itself was a big flop. I flipped as all those Dutch people reminded me of home. Around my eighteenth year, I moved to Brisbane in Queensland where I worked as a waiter again. This was in Surfer's Paradise on the Gold Coast of Australia. I tried out as a comedian in a big nightclub. That club was called the Moulin Rouge and I had a kind of show blocked for myself with some jokes and two songs in it. However, instead of flowers, I got tomatoes and other things thrown at me during my act. Later on, when flowers were thrown at me during an appearance, I still imagined that they were rotten tomatoes. Also,

I auditioned for the television show Bandstand. However, because I couldn't hear the piano well, everything went wrong for me.

After all that travel, I just went back to the familiar life in Adelaide. I went back and resumed my work there as a waiter and bartender. Meanwhile, I had given myself an artist's name—Luke Dixie. The name "Dixie" I had seen on frozen chickens which were very popular in Australia. A new phase in my life came. Now, the real artist was raised in me. Through an employment office, I was offered a job on a building site. I went there with a packet of bread under my arm. From a construction trailer, I got a shovel and started to dig a big hole. After digging two holes, I just had it and walked out without saying anything.

I soon found work behind the bar again, now in the Shandon Hotel where many renowned artists stayed if they had a gig in Adelaide. Sometimes they called for room service and in their room, I saw such a large tape recorder with which they practiced. With one of them, I became very close. His name was Jay Justin, who was known on radio and TV. At the bar, he often sang several songs and then asked me if it would be a hit. One of the songs was *I Walk Along With My Head Held High*. Later, this became a number one hit. Another time, I encountered Jay Justin in a large club in Sydney where he played this song.

I was trying to organize something. My plan was to rent the town hall and bring in as many artists and dancers for a show. A lot of people were attracted to this. However, I didn't have enough money to stage it. It would cost me more than 500 euros, I realized after planning everything. The whole operation had to be canceled. I dared not to tell the artists and passed it on to someone else. Luckily, I soon found my first engagement as Luke Dixie in a small nightclub called The Latin Quarter. The show consisted of jugglers, singers, and striptease dancers. I played a lecturer and performed some songs and jokes. My name was mentioned in the ads, "Host-Compere Luke Dixie". This time, I got no tomatoes but applause from the audience. Among those present were opal and gold miners. Those guys gave many strippers a piece of opal as a reward for the services rendered. I didn't get a piece of opal but my reward as host consisted of accompanying the striptease dancers to and from the scene.

It was around this time that I had the idea of conquering the world with an original song. I secretly dreamt of records and television appearances. The song was made quickly and I called it *Do The Scratch Dance, Girl*. I had to arrange this song and work with an orchestra. I also wanted to create a new dance craze with it. I left a demo recording of the song with radio stations. I thought I might have drilled into a veritable goldmine. It was 1964 and I was almost 20 years old when I left to record this demo with a band which consisted of five men from Adelaide. After much practice and recordings, I walked out of the studio with a few fresh copies of my song on vinyl but still without a label. I was proud as a peacock and I wanted everyone to hear it. However, in Adelaide, nobody was interested in my song so I decided to try it elsewhere. However, I had little or no money but being confident in my creation, I went on stage and wrote checks here and there out of the checkbook which I had received from the bank. Still, what I did and where I went, I had no success.

I traveled to Melbourne, Sydney, and Brisbane where I saw the famous Dutch organist Bernard Drukker playing in the large lounge of Surfer's Paradise at the Chevron-Hilton Hotel. Armed with the scores of my songs in my head, I asked him to play these for me. It was magical to be there in that big dining room and hear him play an adaptation of my own songs. Afterwards, the people stood up and applauded. I then realized that they found my songs beautiful. Unfortunately, this wasn't a record company or television station so I had to continue peddling with my product which had already cost me so much money. Meanwhile, I earned nothing but kept writing checks. Despite all the good ideas and my blind faith in success, my songs failed to interest people.

11. FREMANTLE PRISON (1)

Panic hit me at once and I was back in Adelaide. Meanwhile, I had built a large bank debt and it meant that I could be convicted. Armed with courage, I went to a television station. They listened to my ideas and my shots but rejected my plan. The ground under my feet began to be pulled in Adelaide and as a precaution, I avoided the police. Along the way, I ended up in Port Lincoln with friends. They saw immediately

that there was something going on with me but I denied it and took the train to Perth. Without money and without a job, I moved into a small hotel. On arrival, I spoke to a man and told him my story about the *Scratch Dance* and what had happened to me. The next day, there was a knock on my door. Two police detectives asked me to go to their office kindly but firmly. After many hours of questioning, I confessed that I was frightened and fled. They still wanted to imprison me and I was accused of vagrancy. Indeed, there was at that time a law—I don't know if that law still exists—that you could be arrested if you didn't have enough financial resources and no permanent place of residence. So, I was brought into a small courtroom where I was sentenced to 31 days in jail without a lawyer or defense. That was in October 1964.

I was immediately transferred to the now-famous museum, Fremantle Prison. The interior of the cell was very sober and consisted of an iron bed, a wooden bench, some horse blankets, and a bucket as a toilet. I was 20 years old and desperate. How could I have been so stupid and so obsessed with a dream? Now, I was in prison with murderers, rapists, and bank robbers. I was sitting a few cells away from Eric Edgar Cooke, who was waiting for the execution of his sentence. Sometimes, I saw Eric walking between two guards wearing a jacket without buttons in his own enclosed outdoor space.

The work day consisted of sawing through huge tree trunks with huge saws. The conversation between the prisoners actually consisted of only two questions—"What have you done" and "How long did they give you". When I gave them an honest answer, they laughed at me. Some had been there for years and still had many years to grind. At work, we were closely watched by a guard with a rifle from a tower who was at the ready to shoot. Sometimes, he threw half-smoked cigarette butts down at us and then everyone ran away. I remember that a prisoner, who was charged with making tea for the guards, was told that the tea was not drinkable. At one time, he was so angry that he peed into the tea pot and took them to the guards. What fun we had when the guards said that it was nice tea!

For the rest, life in prison was hell on earth. Everybody was reduced to nothing more than a 4 or 5-digit number including me. We got

half a loaf of bread, a big can of black tea, and some porridge in the morning. Dinner was served in a kind of aluminum lunchbox with a lid. Furthermore, once a week we got a small bag of sugar which we used to make jam. Later on, I learned that they put bromide in the tea to suppress our sexual urges. Every prisoner had his own kind of blunt knife, a fork, and a spoon in his cell. The floor of the cell was made of wood which had to be kept clean with a kind of shoe polish. Some went so far as shining the floor until it was like a mirror. Once a week, we went to shower together in a large room. We were given clean clothes where the size of the clothes we got was always a surprise. Every prisoner was given half a packet of tobacco once a week. It mainly consisted of tobacco waste and long stems and had the nickname "bubshit". With tobacco, we could get almost everything done. We could exchange it for sugar, jam, or medication.

Before breakfast, every prisoner emptied his shit bucket into a large pit. Then, we rinsed that shit bucket with a disinfectant which spread a very strong-smelling odor. Outside in the yard were rows of taps with a large sink below where we could wash with a piece of green soap and brush our teeth. Then, we had to go in and were again locked in our cells. Our breakfast was pushed through a hatch in the door.

At that time, a huge voltage was in the air because of the imminent execution of Eric Cooke. I tended at that time to sing to myself. Sometimes, there was a security guard who banged at my door and shouted, "Shut up! There is someone here to be hanged." I kept my mouth shut. I also wanted to write songs but I had nothing to write with. One day, I cut a pencil stub with my blunt eating knife. The sheets of writing paper I got from my toilet roll. I was also happy to be able to write a book that I spontaneously started to sing my lyrics again. Suddenly, I heard footsteps and my prison door was thrown open with a ferocious swing. There was a little sneaky guard with a cap in front of me who shouted, "Shut up!" I was petrified on my bed. At that time I was holding my eating knife. "Are you threatenin' me?" he shouted at me, pointing to the knife in my hand. I replied "no" and put my knife down quickly. He didn't listen, shut the door of my cell, and left. Soon, I was

taken to an observation cell which was diagonally across Eric Cooke's. It was a cell which consisted entirely of the front bars and the light stayed on day and night. No one told me how long I had to stay there. Locked in this observation cell on death row, I was able to keep an eye on Eric Cooke. I watched his old mother—crying and cowering—walk out of his cell and pass my cell. That was a frightening sight. I still remember it clearly. It was her last visit before her son would be executed.

One or two days before he was hanged, I was put back in my cell. There was great excitement in the whole prison. Everyone was silent because everyone knew what was going to happen. The morning of the execution was silent. We all waited for 8 o'clock in the morning because at that time, Eric Cooke would be hanged. We felt a kind of awe. That morning, we had to stay in our cells. When we were finally allowed to go outside for air, I was asked by a security guard to clean Eric Cooke's cell. Armed with a broom and a dustpan, I swept the last cigarette butts he had smoked. It felt so unreal. At that moment, I realized that no man on earth could take the life of another man, not Eric Cooke, but also not the prison authorities.

After four weeks, minus a few days off for good behavior, I exchanged my jumpsuit for ordinary civilian clothes. I also got my personal belongings back such as my lighter and golden rings. It was eight o'clock in the morning. The feeling was unreal and the tension, high. I looked up to the towers where the guards who gave me so much fear were holding their guns. The only thought that played through my mind was "Never again!" I glanced through the fence which would be opened within moments. Soon, I saw the green grass and the flowers which glittered in the sun. "Don't look back when you leave because you'll come right back," my fellow prisoners told me. Between two guards, I walked on the green grass towards the big front doors. This was the moment every prisoner longed for but that would never come for some. After those big doors was another small door where I had to go through. The guards shook my hand and said, "Never come back." When the door opened, I stepped through the doorway and I was free again. Free.

12. YATALA LABOUR PRISON

I hadn't even crept a few steps into the free world when suddenly, two men in suits emerged. They had papers in their hand and asked me who I was. Then, they showed me a warrant for signing and exchanging bad checks. Thus, my freedom had only lasted a few minutes. Nobody told me that someone was standing outside the door waiting for me. The shock was great. That same day, I was flown back to Adelaide. Next to me on the airplane was a detective who was very sweet and kind to me. We talked about anything and everything. However, my heart was pounding because I had no idea how it would end. There was one thing I knew for sure. I was certainly not a criminal. I just had a lot of regrets. Why had I been so irresponsible and ran away? In an effort to make a deal, I offered the detective my gold ring, the only thing of value that I owned. However, he didn't take on my proposal.

On arrival in Adelaide, we were met by another detective. The three of us went for coffee in a restaurant. They also bought me some chocolates and sweets. Then, they went away and I was left alone for about ten minutes. It just flashed through me to flee but I was happy to sit until they returned. I was driven to the police headquarters in a car and put behind bars. After a few days, I would be tried. I got a lawyer or another form of legal aid which I had never heard of. Everyone expected my acquittal or being slapped with a small fine because I could just be indicted under false pretences and not forgery which imposed a significant, heavier punishment. Meanwhile, the detective, who had accompanied me to Adelaide brought me some food because I didn't have dinner yet. The food consisted of thick slices of bread with salted fat and paloni, a type of sausage made of lard. After a few days, I was brought together with many other suspects. It was a small courtroom. The detective who had accompanied me still recalled the gold ring which I had offered as the first repayment. There was talk about the scratch dance which was a flop. Before I knew it, I was sentenced to 5 to 6 months' imprisonment. Each bad check had a particular sentence, and the number of checks together resulted in my conviction.

I was transferred to Yatala Labour Prison in Adelaide. This prison looked just like Fremantle Prison. Again, I was locked up in the midst

of at least a thousand other convicts. I soon learned that I was not the only one who had ended up in prison for such an offense. We were the lowest in rank within the prison population. We were the “softies” in the eyes of the other prisoners. With good behavior, we had the opportunity to be placed on a working farm without cells and without walls. For my first week, I spent it among the heaviest of the criminals. One day, I was called by one of them to his cell while I was busy polishing steel staircases with steel wool. When I walked into his cell, he immediately tried to rape me. I resisted violently and just at that moment, a guard came walking by and wondered what was going on. I replied, perplexed, “Nothing, sir.” Had I said yes, it would cost me my head. The other prisoner excused himself by saying that he only wanted to give me a cookie and pushed a biscuit in my hand. After a warning from the guard, I continued with the polishing. Later that day, the same security guard called me into his office and asked me again about what had happened. Fearing for my life, I lied to him again and said, “Nothing, sir.”

I was now determined to never do anything that could make me end up in prison. I went looking for help and soon, I found out that there was a psychiatrist in the prison. I wrote my name on the list for an interview. I thought that maybe he could help me. You had to do it secretly because you were called a weakling if you went to a psychiatrist by the other prisoners and guards. The first thing I noticed during the first interview was that he was a listener. He was a nice old man. After just a few conversations with the psychiatrist, I was transferred to the working farm. It was a world of difference, there was almost total freedom. The only thing that was not allowed was to leave the premises. If you did that, then you would end up in the same prison and got an extra penalty. Instead of the famous prison clothes, the inmates who contributed to the farm wore khaki-colored clothing. Every day, we were counted a few times to see if we were all still there. We were not prisoners but “trainees”. Later, I found out that the prisoners who were convicted of rape or murder could spend their last months of detention here to get used to freedom. Food was plentiful and almost all came from the farm itself. I worked on the land and that involved planting, digging, water pipes construction, and tractor driving. Life there did me good. The high

degree of freedom and peace, the sun, the outdoors and nature were for me a relief after the difficult times of struggle and survival in prison. As strange as it sounds, this gave me an opportunity to find myself.

In an attempt to recognize my life experiences, I started writing. I wanted to know why my life was as such. Many other prisoners had the same question. Did I want to act deliberately? With whom did the ultimate responsibility lie? I just knew for sure that it would never happen again. Where was the path to the light, I thought. Sadly, I didn't know. When I read the Bible, I didn't believe that Jesus walked on water and transformed water into wine. I didn't believe it but I had a whole Catholic upbringing. My heart was in deep pain, imbued with wounds from the past which were still open and not yet ready to be healed.

I also began to write songs and melodies again. I sang them dozens of times in succession in the hope that I would never forget them because I couldn't write notes. Years later, the same lyrics and melodies came quite naturally. Once a month, there was a visiting day for everyone. Our pants and shirts were ironed, and our hair was fixed with gel. The inmates saw their wives and children or their parents. I saw how they had nice picnics in the grass until it was time to say goodbye. Afterwards, everyone was always upside down and it took a few days until everything came back to balance. On those days, I stayed alone in the dormitory and fought back the tears. Nevertheless, the days flew by and faster than expected, the day of my release came and everything would be over. I wanted to get away from the farm and the prison. I wanted to start a new life with joy and fun. However, it was repeatedly instilled in me that I would come back again. "Everyone comes back," it was said. I hated that, although I did see for myself that it was true. Many prisoners had already been there several times and for me, it was actually the second time I got stuck. The day of my release was a day of great stress. All my personal belongings were given back to me and I got a ticket for the train to Adelaide. While I was in a van that drove down the field, I didn't look back. When I was dropped off on the platform, it was like a new world opened for me. It was a world where I could really breathe and where I was no longer a number.

13. ADELAIDE

It seemed as if the sun shone brighter, the grass was greener, and more beautiful flowers bloomed. It was over. This time, there was no one waiting for me. There were no detectives, but no friends or family either. I was alone and had to find my way in a world that had showed me so many hells. With the little money I had in my pocket, I found a room in one of the suburbs of Adelaide. What now? After thinking, I had an idea, a hunch. I had seen some of those people who sold promotional items at the store. I thought that it could be something for me as it was some kind of an entertainer. I went to a large department store and had a conversation with the personnel manager. He let me do a test run right away and then immediately took me in for five hours a day. I was a *store image* or the *ten-minutes-special man*. I went to a particular department armed with a microphone to promote a particular product's special offer for ten minutes. My voice could be heard in the entire department and very soon, I learned to include all kinds of jokes in my sales pitch which everyone was wildly enthusiastic about. It was a great success. Nothing, absolutely nothing, was wrong about selling or promoting ladies' underpants. Again, the jokes flew out the door. I saw how I was appreciated by women. With one of them, I had my first sexual experience. Later on, I learned that she was married. She even introduced me to her husband and children. I remember how I felt because we did something that they shouldn't know about. I never wanted to experience this hypocritical feeling again.

Meanwhile, I had found my way into third-rate nightclubs like the Latin Quarter where I was appointed as host/singer Luke Dixie. The work consisted of the promulgation of artists, singing a couple of my own songs, and telling some jokes which stretched up to early in the morning. Straight from the club, I would report to the department store as the *ten-minutes-special man*. I lived in a boarding house where I slept, ate, and where the laundry was done for me. I worked day and night and the beer flowed freely at that time. I also had bought another old car which I drove around if I had time. Yet, there was a void in me and I used all the resources at hand to fill that gap. However, the funds did not help. I lived more and more out of balance. I just had contact with a television

which showed interest in the *scratch dance*, but that fell through also. Afraid that I was going to walk financially out of hand again, I didn't insist and left it there.

I fell in love with a beautiful young lady who studied physiotherapy at the university. Her father was a pastor of the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Sometimes, I went with her to church. My love for her went so far as I was about to proclaim "Go Hallelujah!" When I found out she was not so religious, I quickly stopped my cry. We were madly in love with each other and I went with her to numerous student parties where I had to demonstrate how I sold those panties to women. At night, we often secretly slipped into her room and made love for hours. Not only was I worried that we would be seen by her landlady, but I was also afraid of the skeleton under her bed which she needed for her studies. She also frightened me with stories about how she cut open a corpse in one of her classes. She was a sweetheart whom I loved very much. She had such an understanding of my situation and after all these events, I finally found some value and recognition with her and her student friends. However, in my heart I wore a stone which I needed to let go of.

As strange as it may sound, although I had every reason to be happy, I wanted to die. Everyday, I felt suicidal as I was alone. I loved the crazy, unreal world. All these feelings became stronger by the day. I also got more and more afraid that my girlfriend would leave me. This mixture of jealousy and fear of abandonment became an obsession for me. My situation became increasingly desperate and hopeless. To suppress this feeling, I began to drink. There were nights that I didn't go to bed. I wrote songs or was busy doing small inventions especially in the area of children's games and utensils. Work in the nightclub just passed through like the work in the department store. One night, I had drunk so much that my girlfriend had to drive me home. Once in the boarding house, I had to promise myself that I would go to sleep and would not go out. Anyway, I went off that night along with another resident and tore my car through the streets looking for a burger joint. In a hurry, I didn't see a car which was parked in the bent of the road. I went at full speed towards it, hit it three times, and my car went upside down. I crawled out of the wreck and screamed to my fellow passenger, "Are you okay?"

There was no answer. I called again, "Are you okay?" Then, I heard his voice and a little later, he crawled out of the car. I cleverly threw away the bottle of sherry I had in the car. The ambulance arrived and we were taken to the hospital. The next morning, we were allowed to go home. There was fortunately no problem with me, thank God. However, my car was a total wreck. I was lucky to have received no ticket because the car I hit was parked in a no parking zone. A few days later, I was back at the department store. In addition to the microphone, I also used a horn which directed the attention of shoppers towards me. One day, it all went wrong. With thousands of people in the store, from the office where I oversaw the entire sales floor through a large window, I announced a product by saying "there's a fire in my heart". It suddenly seemed that the audience only reacted on the word "fire" and thought that the whole building was on fire. I saw their panicked reactions and was startled. I quickly corrected myself by saying "There's a burning desire." After this incident, I was called upon by the personnel manager who understood the misunderstanding quickly and gave me a scolding, nothing more.

14. WAY OUT?

As a *ten-minutes-special-man*, I was now a celebrity amongst shoppers. Nothing was too crazy for me to do. I stood in the spotlight. However, all this was only on the outside. My voice was getting hoarse as it was tired from constantly selling items. I was also tired, tired of life. I then thought that not all happiness came from the outside. My life looked like a large tree trunk which was rootless and empty inside. It once had beautiful bark. With an empty heart full of pain, one that craved love and light, I wanted to give up. I didn't want to go on living. Unconscious and stubborn as I was, I went into battle with myself. I didn't seek for help from psychiatrists or social workers. The idea of committing suicide became stronger every day. I knew now that it was very easy to get sleeping pills at the pharmacy without a prescription. On that day, I bought three packets of sleeping pills from different pharmacies and bought a bottle of sherry. Back in my room in the boarding house, I wrote a short farewell note and put on my best suit. I drank the bottle of sherry almost empty and then took the sleeping pills with the last sip

of sherry. I must have taken about fifty pills. I stretched out on the bed. Slowly, I saw everything around me disappear—the walls, the windows, and the ceiling. I sank deeper and deeper, never to wake up. I had put an end to my life and would within minutes breathe my last breath back into the wind of existence. For me, it was serious. I wanted to rest forever and took flight like a bird flying past the sun to permanently disappear behind the clouds. What happened after that, I can't remember exactly.

What I know is that I lay there peacefully to die and three days later, I was on a bed in a large hospital. I saw a lady doctor sitting at my bedside.

I was extremely weak and semi-conscious. Lovingly, she told me that I had a heart attack but they were able to revive me. She also pointed out a possible sore throat because of the many pills that had been in my throat. On my forehead, a big bump was visible but how it got there, I never found out. The weird thing about the whole situation was that I felt very happy in that hospital bed. Nobody knew anything about it. The friends who visited me and also the staff saw my cheerfulness. Later on, I learned what had happened. Another boarder from the boarding house, Robbie, went to my room and saw the suicide note. He was alarmed and because of his quick actions, he saved my life. After my suicide attempt, I continued to express a happy spirit. I was worried that this suicide attempt would again lead to a conviction and a stay in a prison, but thankfully no one filed a complaint against me. After my discharge from the hospital, I made an appointment with a psychiatrist. I just saw the doctor once and didn't come back. Something had changed in me. I was not the young man who no longer wanted to live. By that suicide attempt, I was fortunate to experience and feel that no one could diminish me. I was retrieved by the medical community. Now, I was sure that my life was not over. I was saved and I felt reborn. I felt that I was at the beginning of a new life.

15. PERTH (1)

When I got back to my boarding house, I was received with love. I resumed work at the department store. Soon, the message went around about what had happened to me so I decided to leave Adelaide for good and go back to Perth to start a new life. The train called the Indian

Express carried me through the Nulbar along Iron Rock which was 4,000 km away. It brought me to a place where I could “be” though I didn’t know what this really meant. Well, a number of lines from Shakespeare’s Hamlet shot through my head. Those were the rules I had to quit when I auditioned for a theater role, “*Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player, that struts and frets his hour upon stage and then is heard no more, it’s a tale, told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing...*” It was now 1965. I was 21 years old which was an important age because on your twenty-first birthday you become an adult. I was grown when I got off the train with my suitcase in my hand on the platform of Perth. Now what?

In a small, cheap hotel in the center of Perth specially designed for frequent guests, I booked a room. The first job I got was that of assistant surveyor for the construction of railways. The work took place in the middle of the desert, not far from the town of Roebourne. It was one of the largest construction companies in Perth. When I was hired, I got a ticket for a flight to Roebourne. The flight was carried out with a little old plane, a DC-3, where the passengers consisted of soldiers who sat on wooden benches at the back. The catering consisted of a packet of bread and cheese with chutney on it. In Roebourne, we were picked up by a truck which drove us to a fully prefabricated village in the middle of the desert which could accommodate hundreds of workmen. All of us were housed in prefabricated cabins. Jim, the main surveyor, and I got into a cab together. In the village was a prefab shop where we could buy cola, cookies, and cigarettes. There was even a primitive type of drive-in movie theater where big films were screened. There was a large cafeteria where all of us had a heavy breakfast each morning. We had scrambled or poached eggs with bacon and sausages. In the evening, we had T-bone steaks, lamb chops, Irish stew, and steak and kidney pie with chips and salad. For dessert, we had jelly and fruit. In the evening, there was a lot of music and drinking. Life was hard and we worked hard. We were paid well and because we were far away from all the temptations of the big city, we virtually spent nothing. It was a man’s world. The workplace consisted of tough men of many different nationalities who worked for

a few years to merit a home in Australia or bring home enough money to their own country.

As surveyors, we had a jeep at our disposal. In our spare time, we sometimes drove to ghost towns—abandoned mining towns just like those from the Western movies with those chattering saloon doors and bars of a prison which back was wiped out. There were whirlwinds which were like tornadoes and tumbleweed, a parched desert plant that rolled about. Sometimes, we walked the mountains and found caves that contained drawings of the first inhabitants of Australia. We also stumbled on huge anthills. Sometimes, we drove to Roebourne to drink a beer in the lounge of a hotel. There were many Aborigines. An Aboriginal woman was called a “gin”. Hence, I still remember the pun: “*Shall we take a gin on the rocks or a bear?*”

We went early into the desert everyday. We took several wooden sticks with us which could be brought up to a special height. These would then be stuck into the ground. Jim looked over the place to be surveyed and then shouted, “*Knock him down...one point...knock him down two points...*” I was not sure what “point” was and I gave the stick a slap and hoped that it was good. The conditions were primitive, naturally rough, and merciless with temperatures at 50 degrees. There was no shelter from the scorching sun. We were dressed only in a pair of shorts and sometimes not even that. What made work really impossible were the flies that were attracted by sweat. Sometimes, my whole back was besieged by hundreds of flies. We had to guard ourselves by applying “scram” on our skin. It was a kind of ointment that also burned our skin. Furthermore, our survival kit consisted of salt tablets that replenished the loss of salts through sweating, a razor blade, and a piece of rope in case we were bitten by a snake. If that happens, you should remain calm. Otherwise, the poison spreads faster through your body. The only form of cooling we had was a canvas bag with water which was hung onto our jeep’s bumper. We made a cup of chai tea. We made a fire and on it, we placed a pickles can where we dropped some tea leaves in.

We didn’t see much of the actual construction of the track because we always worked well as surveyors for the group. Well, we saw the massive excavation and earthmoving equipment with giant rubber

wheels. Sometimes, we drove our jeep to places where our colleagues were engaged in the construction of the railway. I saw how workers of the railway ran down to a van which was stationed a little further from the site. There were two women who turned out to be prostitutes that came all the way from Perth. Every two months, we got a ticket back to Perth and a week's holiday. For many, this meant that all the money earned would be spent on women and drinks, after which they were forced to work in the desert again. I continued this job for about four or five months.

Back in Perth, I rented a room. This time, I had money in my pocket. I bought myself an old taxi, a Falcon. I soon found work at a very large department store called David Jones. I showcased new products for five hours a day which paid well. These products were advertised on television throughout Western Australia. The first product was the non-stick frying pan. That was a miracle product. To fry an egg without butter in a pan had never been done before. It was accompanied by another product from Majestic Products, the flipping spatula, a kind of spatula which had an ingenious mechanism in the handle with could flip the egg. Also, there was the donut maker. With the push of a button, there was a ring of dough. Within a few minutes, you had a ready-made donut. Every day, people queued up to see me demonstrate these products and afterwards, they were ready to pay for these miracle products at checkout. Soon, I was seen by the public as the great expert, the chef, while I had just learned a few tricks. Special cargo planes had to deliver these pans and within months, there were more than 100,000 sold. One time, I expressed too much enthusiasm when I was frying donuts during a demonstration. A big crowd stood watching. The head of the department had to clean up the whole mess because I over—estimated the product.

Besides my work as Mister Demo, I found work in the El Rio Zanzibar where I was host, sang songs and told jokes. I did it with fear and trembled every time. It was as if there was a blockage in my heart when I started singing. I sang without soul and the songs that I sang were almost always the same, *From a Jack to a King*, *Oh When the Saints*, and *Red Roses for a Blue Lady*. As an encore, *He Got the Whole World in His Hands*. Afterwards, I often went often alone or with others to The

Hole in the Wall which played the blues and everyone was allowed to play along. It was a typical club for artists who entertained each other there. It was a large house with large holes in the walls so you could look from room to room. The furniture consisted of milk and beer crates. The Hole in the Wall was my home until I had to go home again. The idea of the club came from a man named Frank Baden-Powell, who would play an important role in my life. So, I gained a lot of artist friends who played in bands. I was pretty much their manager and many times, I tried to book myself as an extra guest. It was a clever way to get gigs. I was also busy writing songs for them. During the day, I still worked as Mister Demo with non-stick frying pans. On my table, I placed a large picture of me as Luke Dixie accompanied by the announcement where I performed that week.

16. JENNY

One day, I was busy doing my demonstration when I saw a young lady smiling at me. She looked like Sophia Loren and didn't look older than seventeen. Sparks flew again. One day, she was there again and between us, there flared up a heavy fire on the challenging message of "pick-me-up-if-you-can". I couldn't hold it anymore and I ran after her on the street. She told me that she was a fashion model and was participating in a fashion show a few blocks away. She said that her name was Jenny and that she was seventeen. Her mother owned several fashion stores. We made an appointment for our first date. We hit it off tremendously. She was young, wild, and wonderful. In addition to her work as a fashion model, she also did some commercials. Her activities fit well with mine. I proudly took her as a kind of trophy to all my gigs. I was proud but also terribly jealous when other men looked at her. If she was dressed sexy, I was mad. Our relationship continued to exist and I suppressed my jealousy and fear of being abandoned as much as possible. My Victorian prudery, I suppressed too. Condoms and the pill were unknown in those days, let alone available. We were both very naive and within a few months, she was pregnant. Abortion was not considered and eventually, her parents decided for us to get married. Meanwhile, I was doing well

as a presenter at her mother's fashion shows and sometimes, I modeled men's clothing.

From the day I met Jenny, it took exactly six months until they dressed her in a white wedding gown which accentuated her big belly. In the Church of England, she gave me her "yes". The party afterwards was graced by the band of the nightclub where I worked in and I also sang some songs with them. Meanwhile, my family in the Netherlands was informed of the situation. On the day of our wedding, the phone rang and I heard the voice of my mother who couldn't utter anything, so my sister took over the conversation quickly. She almost said no words and was in tears. My relationship with the Netherlands was already dilluted at that time. I had already become a naturalized Australian on my eighteenth birthday. To achieve that, I had to pass a test in the English language and customs, and swear allegiance to the Queen.

The day of my wedding was not a happy one for me. I just stood there and looked at her. In another three months, I would be a father. Our honeymoon was to be somewhere on the coast called Albany. I sent a telegram to my workplace with the information that we had extended our honeymoon for a week. Back on Earth, we both went on with our jobs—I with my promotions in the department store, the evening performances at the nightclubs, and the part-time job in the fashion shops of Jenny's mother. I had meanwhile expanded my entertainment desk and housed it in a back room of one of the fashion stores under the name "Luke Dixie Entertainment". I was there literally day and night, seven days a week. Meanwhile, we had rented our first house. It was a simple house for Australian standards—no pool or underground garage—but with a large backyard with grapes. Her parents had a beautiful, big bungalow with a swimming pool where we visited often.

Her mother was of Jewish origin and embittered by her traumatic experiences in the war. All her family members were killed in the Holocaust. Both Jenny's parents were chilly businessmen, especially her mother. The only thing that mattered was her revenue, money and material things, and I was therefore expected to accomplish something. So, I worked day and night, seven days a week. The problem was that Jenny and I never learned to deal with money. She came from a wealthy

family which led to a peaceful existence with servants and a monkey as a pet, while I came from an environment that never had money. To keep up my hectic life, I took a upper occasionally. It proved to be a disastrous path and soon, all the beauty disappeared into the background. So, I was totally unaware of the significance of a pregnancy to a woman. Also, I had never stopped to think what it would mean for a father to worry about his child.

17. MILTON

She was now nine months pregnant and we celebrated New Year's Eve by the pool at her parents' house along with many friends and acquaintances. The food and drink was plenty. It was a hot summer night and everyone feasted on curry with rice. At that time, Jenny started getting contractions and had to be taken to the hospital. On January 1, 1966, our son was born a healthy boy of seven pounds. We named him Milton which was the last name of her father. They didn't ask for my opinion and I had to swallow that. I later heard that he was circumcised. I was furious. Someone had done something to my child which I didn't want and which was irreversible. Only later did I realize why I wasn't there. I stood alone in front of this strange family. I myself had no family or real friends in Australia. I was totally dependent on my wife's family. My main concern was to keep the peace so I swallowed my dissatisfactions. I had a child and thus felt the pressure of responsibility even more. I tried to think of new ways to make money. Thus arose "Demo the Clown" and "Spotty Dotty and the Puppet Show". I also worked in the evenings with small inventions like the *Does-It-All*, the *Non-Drip-Cup-and-Saucer*, plus many other useful or funny things like the *Perth Canned Air*. These were simply cans with air in it. These cans were purchased and sent as souvenirs with the text that read, "*Please do not open or your gift will disappear!*" They were quite successful and were sold in many cases. The newspapers gave much attention to this product, even the ones in England.

With our child, things went well. We often went with him to the zoo or we went out for a picnic or barbecue. I loved him but I couldn't fully express it. There was a wall between us or rather in me. I also became

more frustrated and angry because I had to put up with her entire family. I was never good enough for them. I really did everything to get more money but as I said, we couldn't handle it. All the money disappeared just as quickly as it came and I didn't know where it went exactly. So, I started making clothes for commercials and I improved my clown act with a penny-farthing. I cycled on an old-fashioned bicycle with a very large wheel in front and a small wheel at the rear. I also drove around in an old antique Morris which I painted white with an orange cap and gold painted headlights. Often, I used this for our own advertising and behind it was a large sign that said, "*Having a Party? Having a Ball? Demo the Clown is the One to Call!*"

During a promotional tour through town, I jumped out of the car which then rode alone. In the meantime, I combed my hair with a huge crest of a meter. This was always a success and the phone at home rang with telephone inquiries and bookings. For an hour, the "clown" earned half a week's salary. Of course that was beautiful, but the pressure to perform and earn money increased. For Jenny's parents, I was but a son and in their eyes, nothing and no one was good enough for their daughter. I began to think that there was something wrong with me. Every now and then, to forget that pressure I took an upper with alcohol like many artists did. However, this only worsened the situation. I was a machine, completely unaware of what was going on with me. I was disapproving and terribly jealous of my wife. When they held a lingerie show, I often had major tantrums. I became unruly, aggressive, and wanted to turn my life around. Because of those pills, my true feelings came up again and I wanted to die. I couldn't do so because I had a family and a small child which I loved remotely.

The situation at home worsened by the day. My young wife never learned to cook, keep the house clean, or care for our child. I, who was brought up in the traditional gender roles, was furious when I found a dirty diaper in a corner again, full of shit and worms. There was no consultation, no real contact between us. I was at that time still very prudish and saw through the tricks of the photographers when the photos were published in the newspapers. My jealousy or feelings were not taken into account by her family.

Meanwhile, at the department store I took the place of one Scott as *Mister Gadget*. He had his own television program of 15 minutes per week and I took over that program. At the same time, my wife and I had created a pilot show for Channel 9 for a new children's program, "*Demo the Clown*" and we performed together as puppets on "*Spotty Dotty...*" We thus started to get quite famous in Perth. Sometimes, I did three shows a day during the weekends in the big department stores. Also, we appeared in the newspaper ads regularly. I also made my first commercials. Everything ran smoothly and in my mind I was already away, 6,000 kilometers to be exact. There was Sidney, the great city where all the great artists and shows came from. For me, Sidney was the Hollywood of Australia, the springboard which I could use to make it throughout Australia. It meant a lot of money, big cars, and a big house. Without waiting for the results of the pilot show and *Mister Gadget*, the three of us went by train to Sydney, away from her family. The road to fame and fortune was now open to us. It was a way that everyone said would not save us. We would prove that we were right later on.

18. SYDNEY

Sydney is the largest city in Australia with King's Cross, the Harbour Bridge, and the hydrofoil or ferry which can take you from one side of town to the other. It was the time of the construction of the largest opera house in the world which cost additional millions before the world stars could stage their voices there for many years. Upon arrival, it was not so difficult to find an apartment. We went to live in the famous area of Bondi, a few hundred meters from the beach. With the windows open, we could hear the sea in our room. However, we didn't have time for beach visits. We had to work to survive. The house, which was rented furnished, consisted of a floor with three bedrooms. On Pitt Street was the big department store called Anthony Hordern & Sons. I immediately wanted to work as *Mister Demo* just like in Perth. That gave a fixed income and in addition, I could still hang out with the artists in the nightclubs. Anthony Hordern & Sons was similar to the Bijenkorf in Amsterdam—it was a department store where you could easily get lost. After a conversation with the personnel manager who saw opportunities

for me, I was referred to the Advertising & Promotions Department. After having showed them examples and pictures of my work in Perth, I immediately got the offer to participate in a major advertising campaign with forty commercials on TV and ads in the newspapers. I was to play a major role.

During the day, I would spend five hours a day in one of their stores and in addition, I would be used for various advertising and promotional activities. It all sounded like I had won the jackpot. Everything depended only on a number of test recordings of the production agency. The test recordings were made in a small shed in the presence of a cameraman and producer. Everything was shot in black and white on 16mm film and was then transferred to video. When the trial recordings were found to be good, agreements were made and contracts were signed for the first set of commercials. The first series were shot at the famous tourist spots in Sydney. Together with a colleague, I played the role of a spy, Anthony Hordern. He met his colleagues in secret and they were dressed in the clothes and shoes of a famous brand. As we passed each other, we always showed to one another the name of the department store, Anthony Hordern & Sons. The shooting lasted for weeks and took place outdoors in the blazing sun. We received a lot of attention from people who wondered what we were doing and for which the recordings were intended. Although I felt fear inside and still swallowed pills, I enjoyed all the attention and fame immensely. The final commercials would be broadcast on Channel 9, Channel 7, and Channel 4 in Wollongong. The day of the first broadcast was a great dismay. Instead of airing the commercials we made, the old commercials were broadcast. Fortunately, the error was corrected a day later and we could finally see the results on television. I remember how I, along with my wife and child, were glued to the tube as we watched the parts I played, paying particular heed to the number of close-ups that was in it.

At that time, I was so engrossed in my work that I couldn't be who I wanted to be for my son who was now one year old. Meanwhile, my wife became pregnant again and as a result, the pressure to perform got even bigger. I had a hole in my hand and the money went just as easily as it came. In addition, I drank and took Valium and Librium to keep

myself calm. Women were fond of me, I had noticed. Many women wanted more and sometimes, I fell for it. Sometimes it was so surreal that they knocked at the door of our apartment in Bondi. In addition to the alcohol and the pills, I had major tantrums. I always found a reason to be angry. For a few times, I even hit my wife. In retrospect, it was easy to say why we grew increasingly apart. We got married too young. She was seventeen and I was twenty-two. I came from a very different background. She was taking care of the household and I couldn't help her. I began to realize that she was the right woman for me but I was not the right man for her. I had never learned how to be a good father. If a soul is covered in hurt and pain, it must first be released from this before it can give the warmth that a child needs.

My sense of inadequacy as a father and husband, I tried to compensate with success in my work. My first commercials were aired daily and now twenty new ones were made in which I had to act like a Chinese, Mexican, Roman, or primitive man. Because I had to talk in spots, I took classes in elocution, timing, and expression. I gradually became a familiar figure and was invited to Club 77, an exclusive private club where artists and people from the film and radio & television world met each other. In addition to my work in the department store, I often had to go to places in the suburbs where I attracted a lot of attention. Sometimes, I was afraid of all the fame and attention with the sight of all those antennas on the roofs. All the people in those houses saw me daily on the tube up to six times a day. Some saw a great talent in me and slowly, I was prepared for the big time. I became a model in the fashion parade of Vogue in the Tattersalls Club. One time, I was so blinded by all the spotlights that I thundered down the catwalk much to the amusement of the audience. My wife was in the audience. I went behind the scenes in a totally unknown world for me. I felt like an outsider among all those top mannequins. The new advertisements were now ready and like a real movie star, I was invited to the premiere in a cinema in the city. Together with all the staff of the department store, hundreds of guests were present and I was with my producer, tucked away in the back row. After all the scenes were shown, I heard applause and was stunned by it. It was all very surreal. On the canvas, I was the clown, the

great comedian, but nobody knew how my heart cried and how anxious I was inside.

I had to go at the expense of so many. Life-sized posters were created which were suspended at the shop windows and stores. I also appeared at the front page of the newspapers with many deals. And so, I was sweetly known in many parts of New South Wales. I had made it into the showbiz world just like Steward Wagstaff, Graham Kennedy, Paul Hogan, and Rolf Harris. I was even cast through an agency for a film by Sir Richard Attenborough who came to Australia to take on the life of Ned Kelly, the famous bandit of Australia. It starred Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones. I didn't get that role. Maybe that was a good thing because the film was a big flop.

19. ANITA

On November 29, 1968, my daughter Anita Louise was born. She was a beautiful child with blue eyes, blonde hair, and with all the trimmings. Even with the arrival of my second child, my life stayed the same. I just got on with my career. Through my work, I still had contacts with women. One of them was Sherry Aha, a demonstrator for Revlon who worked in the same department I did. Her father had become rich with slot machines and his daughter drove a great sports car. They lived in a huge villa with a pool. They also had a large yacht which took part in the Sydney-Hobart races. Once, she took me to their beautiful home, specifically to the downstairs apartment she inhabited. She wanted us to start a relationship but I didn't want to. After all, I was married and had two children. In a final attempt, she tried to seduce me but when I didn't succumb to her, she became angry, brought me back to the city, and dropped me off near King's Cross. It was over between us.

At that time, I was engaged in test shots for a small program of 15 minutes. The director wanted to capture me exactly as I worked in the warehouse at the department. Once the camera was rolling, something happened to me. I couldn't do it. I had to watch everything at once—the clock, the cue, text, camera, my hands, everything. So, my spontaneity was gone. It just didn't work. I couldn't be myself. I took more pills to suppress the tension but that didn't help. What I feared became true.

The sponsors didn't approve the test shots. My fear got bigger then. One day, I spoke to a very famous actor and the only thing he advised me was to breathe better. I became more ill and lost my grip on life. The work wasn't fun anymore. I just had to continue. I had to care for my wife and two kids.

My attitude was impossible. Inside me, a voice began to shout, "Help me, help me!" However, no one heard it. I couldn't explain what was going on with me. There were days that I no longer went to work and just lay sick in bed. The doctor gave me pills that made me even sicker. I slowly decayed completely. There were no new projects for me. We moved to another house in Dewey but that had little effect. Going to the beach and the bush or having a picnic with the kids did not work. Nothing helped me.

20. BRISBANE

Finally, we decided to leave Sydney to make a fresh start in Brisbane. We sold all our things—except the wagon and some antique stuff—and left Sydney. On the way, we drove through a deserted place which used to have sapphires, diamonds, and gold. We tried our luck with a backward sieve of an old gold digger and indeed, we found a few small sapphires and diamonds. In retrospect, I realized the danger to which we were exposed. We were in the middle of the bush at 50 degrees Celsius with two children in the car, only a jerry can of water and some food, hundreds of miles from the nearest civilization.

In Brisbane, we rented a wooden house with a huge garden in the suburbs. The only furniture was old and worn. We didn't have the money to buy new furniture. Fortunately, we both found work quickly. My wife found a job at the fashion department of a department store. I continued on the main street at Woolworth's as a demonstrator in the advertising department. Here, there were no great movies or fashion shows, no fame or recognition. Although the house was beautiful and iguanas surrounded us, life was hard. The weeks went by. I visited more doctors and I kept up with the pills and drugs. Our two children stayed with a babysitter during the day and we picked them up after work. One day, while I was busy with my demonstrations for shoppers, the

police arrived and wanted to talk to me. They told me that my wife was arrested and was taken to the police station on suspicion of theft. She was caught stealing a dress. The next day, she had to appear in court. As far as I can remember, she spent that night in a cell at the police station. The shock was enormous when I came to see her and saw her behind bars. A strange kind of panic hit my heart. The next day, she was brought to court. Before the judge could open his mouth, I jumped up from the stand and told the judge that it was my fault that she tried to steal something. Was that the truth? Was I the one who took care of the family so badly? I immediately got a huge beating because I had opened my mouth unauthorized. Thank goodness, eventually it ended with a hefty fine and a warning.

Our marriage came increasingly under stress. At work, it was now known that my wife was arrested for theft. I felt ashamed. Since my wife was fired on the spot, I was now the sole breadwinner. Since the situation in Brisbane thus had become untenable, we decided to leave, this time for the coast at Townsville. With a wagon loaded with my wife, two small children, and our remaining stuff, we drove hundreds of miles along the coast. The view was breathtaking. There were golden beaches and the blue green sea. We had now become nomads or wanderers. Were we confident or irresponsible? We settled on a deserted beach near Rockhampton and found a large mobile home with air conditioning but without electricity and water. I soon found work as a bartender and as an employee in the distillery of a small bar but I got fired on the spot because I had given a regular customer who had dropped some bottles on the ground, a free pair of new bottles of beer. My mind began to play more tricks on me. Without work and without money, far away from everything and everyone, the situation soon became untenable. Finally, we decided to leave and return to Brisbane.

21. ST.HELIER'S BAY—NEW ZEALAND

Back in Brisbane, we couldn't find our luck and therefore sold our wagon to be able to go to New Zealand by plane. How and why we came up with this idea, I do not know. I was confused and was looking for a place with peace and stability. Soon, things were settled. Once in

New Zealand, we ended up in Auckland in a place called St. Heliers Bay which had stunning sea views. I had no eye for the beauty of the country, though. I had to look for work and I found one in the middle of the city in a large department store where I promoted and demonstrated products again. However, I had no strength for each day and things got worse. I also received pills from the doctors but these were to no avail. Also, I had more trouble getting out the anger that was in me. My cry for help was getting louder but I couldn't show or explain what I was going through. Eventually, I broke down completely and I was admitted to a psychiatric hospital.

Almost mad with fear, I sat there surrounded by people who were not quite normal. I saw in every man an enemy which caused me to be more afraid. I got more pills that I had to take. Sometimes, they asked me if I heard voices but I didn't hear them. Images flashed before my eyes which made me anxious. When I asked what was wrong with me, they explained to me that I had neurosis which is an emotional imbalance. Luckily, I had no abnormalities in my brain. All this was confirmed by the results of an EEG which they had made of my brain.

Every time they started asking questions about my father and mother, I began to burst with emotions and the tears came. My fear and anger surfaced and I lost control of myself completely. The urge and the struggle for survival had affected me mentally and physically. While I stayed in the hospital, my wife and kids were entertained with food parcels which were paid by an ecclesiastical authority. Meanwhile, my wife contacted her parents in Australia because I was told that we should sail back to Australia as soon as I was discharged from the hospital. With a pocket full of pills, I left the hospital and joined my wife and children who had taken up residence in a small house. I still wasn't well but I knew that it was best to keep going. I was now about 24 years old, my wife was three years younger than me, and my children were 1 and 3 years old. The remaining time we used to explore New Zealand. In those last days, my interest in 78s almost got me in trouble. After I bought a few old 78s in an antique shop, we visited the old records department of a museum. When we were leaving, I was arrested on suspicion of theft because they thought I had stolen the records which I had in a plastic bag. When

I explained that I bought them, they let us go. When we were about to board the ship, two detectives were waiting for us. They began to interrogate me because I was suspected of theft. After I explained what had just happened, I was able to leave with a warning on their part that I should never set foot on New Zealand soil again.

22. PERTH (2)

The boat trip back to Perth took two weeks. Meanwhile, I had invented a combination of pills and Bacardi-Cola which made me feel like I was in a dream. On arrival in Perth, we were picked up by my parents-in-law and again, I realized how alone I was in Australia with no family. There was no room for feelings or emotions at the reunion. Only my performances day and night and making lots of money were what mattered in their eyes. My situation and my past were not spoken of. With pills and hard work, everything would be all right soon. We found a house in Applecross close to Jenny's parents.

I found work again soon. Frank Baden-Powell, a smart businessman, had opened a number of new nightclubs. One of them was called Dirty Dick's Restaurant where you had to eat with your fingers. His latest project was the Hoffbrauhaus which was fully decorated in German style. For this, they were looking for a new Hoffbrauhaus host/singer which would present the shows for the whole evening. I got that job and that meant working six nights a week. The opening night was so successful that we got a full page review in the Sunday Times. Night after night, people stood in line to be let in. I danced and sang together with the other artists. We made the Hoffbrauhaus a huge success. I burst loose every night and didn't rest until everyone was singing and dancing on the tables. I also led the games where the candidates had to try to eat sausages that were strung on a line without using their hands. To sustain my energy, backstage I swallowed Librium pills and drank Avena syrup to keep my voice smooth.

Besides my work at the nightclub, during the day I worked at Baird's, a large department store where I showed my talents as *Mr. Gadget*. On the weekends, my wife joined me in *Demo the Clown*. If that wasn't enough, I also invented items which I tried to sell and where I partially

succeeded. Day and night, I lived and worked in a daze. Yet, despite all that work, I still didn't make enough money. In the few moments that I was free like on Sunday afternoons, I sat with my family at the pool of my in-laws. Usually I went quietly into the bathroom and studied new songs. On one of those Sundays where I was still exhausted from my performance the night before at the Hoffbrauhaus, I separated myself from the family and lay on the bed in the spare room behind the house with the door to the garden and pool open. While everyone was sunbathing, swimming in the pool, or sipping a glass of port or sherry, I fell into a deep sleep. I was totally exhausted from doing all those shows for all those months, 6 days a week.

Meanwhile, my Valium and Librium pills were changed to tiny pills which I don't remember the names of. These were so strong that if you took one too many, you could not stay up. For security, I put these pills in my wife's purse so they were inaccessible to our children. That afternoon, I was suddenly awakened while in the middle of a dream. I saw my two-year-old daughter Anita standing in my room. Her eyes were glassy and they moved from one side to the other. Immediately, my alarm bells went ringing. I was immediately wide awake, ran to the garden and cried, "What is wrong with my daughter?" They replied, "Oh, nothing. Maybe she's had a little too much sun." It wasn't good enough for me. Suddenly, I saw my wife's bag lying on the floor. Beside it was my little bottle of pills which was open and some pills had fallen out. I screamed, "Call an ambulance or a doctor!" I started to count the pills. I knew how much I had taken myself and a lot was missing. I didn't wait for a doctor or ambulance and took my daughter in my arms and ran to my wagon. I stood at the door and shouted, "Call the hospital!" My wife ran after me and I drove at high speed on the highway from Applecross to Perth. It was 10 kilometers to the hospital. My daughter, who was in the arms of my wife, had lost consciousness. I drove even faster. How fast, I couldn't remember. I used my horn as a siren and raced through all the traffic lights on the streets of Perth. On arrival at the hospital, the staff was already waiting for us. My daughter was immediately brought to the emergency room where her little stomach was pumped. After three days of being unconscious, she came back to us. Thank God! That moment

I would never forget. I sat by her bed and suddenly, she opened her beautiful blue eyes. She stood up and with her hands on the bars of her crib, she began to sing a song I had taught her—“*Twinkle, twinkle, little star...*” as if nothing had happened. I cried with joy and gratitude. The doctor gave me a scolding because he felt that I had been irresponsible with my medication. I was shocked and angry because I realized at that moment that if I hadn’t immediately responded, I would probably have been at the bedside of a dead baby.

Life had to go on and soon, I resumed my performances six nights a week. Every night, I performed to make people laugh, dance, and get drunk. My energy was so great that gossips spread that I took pep pills to keep me going. I swallowed everything just to make me calm. My success was so huge that I thought I was eligible for a salary increase. When I gently asked Frank Baden-Powell, he suddenly turned into a beast and threatened to throw me out if I asked him one more time. I was greatly shocked by the reaction of the man who had always been so nice to me. I quickly felt uninspired. Even when I played the clown over the weekend, I could barely keep standing. Often, I stood there with sweat on my forehead which trickled down and ended up in the popcorn pan where it hissed as it evaporated between the corn kernels. I was a clown who cried inside as he was far from his inner home. I was literally about to collapse without anyone knowing what to do exactly. Sometimes, the tears came disguised as aggression. I knew it couldn’t go on but being in a country with no sickness benefits or unemployment services, it was impossible to take a rest.

Also, I was addicted to the applause of the audience. All those caresses which I had missed as a child I so badly needed at the time. I saw that I was inadequate as a father to my children and a husband to my wife. My little son and daughter had a daddy who wasn’t really there. I also saw the shortcomings of my wife who had never learned to run a household and was unable to raise our children responsibly. Sometimes, I came home from work and found the children crying in their beds while my wife was nowhere in sight. I saw it all but I was locked inside myself. The tantrums were getting fiercer. Only for the few times we went as a family to the beach or to the woods did I feel like the father I wanted to be.

No, I was not an easy person to live with. I sought salvation with other women who, after seeing my performances, were willing to share their bed with me. I was looking for affection, security, peace, and a person with whom I could charge up my empty emotional batteries again. Inevitably, the day our marriage would collapse, came near. As usual, we went to visit Jenny's parents every Sunday. My children stayed mostly in or around the pool. They had learned to swim at a young age and moved like dolphins in the water. On the contrary, I was terrified of water especially the deep part, and couldn't keep still for a second. Australia is a land of water sports and many outdoor activities. As a father of two young children, I felt very inadequate by the fact that I was afraid of the water. As a child, I had learned to swim at the Sportfondsenbad in Amsterdam. However, now I had a terrible fear of water which I couldn't overcome. On that Sunday afternoon, my mother-in-law asked me to join them in the pool. She tried to get rid of my fear of drowning with some swimming exercises. She pushed my head under water for several times. At some point, something snapped in me. I couldn't explain it. It was as if I had burst inside. Somehow, I remained breathing and living but I couldn't pick up the thread well. The last bit of strength I had left in me was gone. I was drowning in myself and losing consciousness. It was as if my life was taken over by something else which I didn't understand and that made me very anxious.

One day, when tensions were running high at home again, without saying anything I took my station wagon and drove far away from everything. A day later I was 750 miles away in the old gold mining town of Kalgoorlie. There, I found a cheap hotel where I had to share a room with someone else. A few days later, I found a job as a gardener at a hospital where I had to rake leaves. It was as if I had stepped into a different life and wanted to forget my past as if it never existed. However, in the evenings when I went to the bar for a beer, some people recognized me from some act. No, I was not famous but there were people who knew me as *Mister Demo*, *Demo the Clown*, or from my commercials. I panicked especially when people recognized me. So, I went further away and worked somewhere in a yard. Two weeks passed before my roommate, who had studied psychology, advised me to go to a doctor

or psychiatrist because I was screaming in my sleep in the middle of the night. I took his advice to heart and drove back home to Perth. The next day, I wanted to see my wife and kids who were with my parents-in-law but I wasn't allowed near them. They stood outside on the sidewalk and told me they had reported me as missing and that it was better if I disappeared forever. I told them I was sick but they wouldn't listen. Like a beaten dog with his tail between his legs, I backed off. That night, I slept alone in our house. The next day, I prepared myself to go to Melbourne, about 4,000 km away from Perth.

23. MELBOURNE

I felt that our marriage was over because no matter what I said or did, nothing worked anymore. I had to leave for good. I wondered what all of this meant to my wife and the children. I grabbed my suitcase and without my wife or kids, I took the train to Melbourne. The trip itself, I don't remember much. I was desperately searching for a saving hand, understanding, and insight. With only enough money for one week's rental, I started the trip to Melbourne. I realized that I had started a new life. A man dressed in a suit and tie with a briefcase, totally confused and displaced, stepped out on the platform of Melbourne. The money, intended for the initial lease, was already spent on the expensive food in the train. For the first few days, I slept at the Salvation Army until I found a room to stay in. Finding a job didn't prove easy because I was sick and anxious. Sometimes, I was so anxious that I ran through a door where I saw a sign of a doctor or physician or cried while I strolled through the city, "Help me! Help me!"

Meanwhile, I had been given a room with the promise that I would pay once I had found a job. I began to crave for Perth and wanted my wife and children back. With the last bit of money I had, I went to the post office and sent a telegram home. The answer was "*Never come back. I have found another man.*" This telegram was the final blow that I needed to collapse completely. I read the telegram again and again. Distraught, I wandered around. I must have visited doctors at that time because I had tranquilizers. I couldn't go on and wanted to be admitted to a hospital. A doctor referred me to a mental hospital but I was rejected

because they felt that I was not crazy enough. After much argument between doctors and hospitals, there was again an interview for an inclusion in an experimental psychotherapy department. Here, I was indeed accepted. Everyday, I got anxiety and panic attacks which gave me the feeling that I was really going crazy. One of the conditions of residence in that department was that I couldn't swallow any medicine anymore. However, stopping the medication made me have panic and anxiety attacks which were even fiercer. I dared not to walk out. I lay in a room where I had a roommate. On the walls were some pictures of me from my advertising films and a few small photos of my children which I took when I left the house.

In the ward, I was part of a support group which consisted of about 12 men with a psychiatrist with whom you could talk about your problems. For the rest of the time, I only remember that I was in bed. While the other patients sometimes went home on the weekends, I was forced to stay inside the hospital. At that time, I got to know the music of Simon and Garfunkel especially the song *Bridge Over Troubled Water* which grabbed me though its content totally eluded me. I didn't understand why young people liked that song. There were all kinds of patients around the ward. There was one who walked around with a big cross of Jesus on his chest because he was visited by the devil, according to him. That made a big impression on me. Another fellow patient would soon be converted from male to female. He had to undergo various tests beforehand to check whether that decision was correct. There were those who were addicted to drugs, marijuana, or alcohol and those with agoraphobia, which was a bit like my problem. They did a lot of sports and labor but didn't involve me. All patients were assigned to wash and dry the plates after eating. When it was my turn, I often flew into a panic at the sight of the large kitchen knives. Later, I realized that I was afraid of what I could do with a knife. Meanwhile, I expressed my sorrow with a thousand tears over the loss of my children who were far away and from whom I heard nothing more. In total, I spent six months in that hospital.

The treatment at the hospital was still in an experimental stage. I had no idea what "conscious" and "unconscious" meant, let alone what "higher consciousness" was. I just wanted the sufferings and the miserable

feelings to disappear. At that time, I was afraid of everything. Day and night, I was afraid. The only way I could reduce my anxiety was to take medications such as Valium, about 40 or 50 milligrams per day, whereas the normal dosage was 10 to 15 milligrams. I also took Mogadon, a kind of hypnotic sedative. When I took it, I felt my body slowly relax and I fell asleep without any problems. Because there was not much improvement in my situation, the psychiatrist asked me if I wanted to do a test which consisted of taking drugs a number of weeks. At the end of each day, I had to fill out a questionnaire with questions about my well-being. I got even crazier from all these questions and cried out in misery. One day, I felt tremendous anger and ran to the office of the social workers and yelled, "Help me! Help me!" However, nobody wanted to help me. They told me that I had to finish the tests because I needed medication. I wanted to get away from all that bullshit in the discussion groups which I got nothing from. Everyday, I crawled into bed as soon as an activity or chore was over. Often, I visited fellow patients, especially the women, who also had several problems. One day, a young woman sat on my bed and started to play around with me. She suddenly grabbed a pillow and pressed it onto my face. My whole body began to tremble and shake. I saw all kinds of images in a flash that I could not identify. In panic, I screamed. The people in the hallway heard my screams. A psychiatrist gave me an injection to calm me down. The next day, when I took part in the group, the psychiatrist told me that I had to trust him. Once the session started, there was even talk about what happened that night. Thousands of pictures came up and I started to cry spontaneously, "I'm a murderer! I'm a murderer!" When I could open my eyes again, I saw that I was alone with the psychiatrist and all the other group members ran away in panic. However, I didn't kill anyone. That day, I walked around feeling like I was healed. The same day, the psychiatrist saw me and made it clear that I still wasn't healed and that this was only the beginning. I still remember that day like it was yesterday.

One day, a few of us were invited to participate in an experiment. A psychotherapist came from America and the word "Gestalt" was mentioned for the first time. In a room full of social workers, doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, I was called forward and was asked to play

the role of the psychiatrist. I observed him well and played the part well. A fellow patient, a tall slender man, came forward and began to speak to me. Since I played the role of the psychiatrist, I always looked at my watch, smoked cigarettes, and avoided asking questions. The fellow patient felt rejected by my behavior so he burst into anger. He was just about to hit me when a psychotherapist came between us. We stopped the role-playing. For the first time, I felt that I could play different roles.

This breakthrough turned out to have been enormously important for my further development. It was strange because even if I spent six months in the hospital, I couldn't even remember its name. Despite the treatments, experiments, and discussion groups, I kept my fear. I hadn't heard from my wife and children. My sense of isolation increased especially on weekends when the other patients went home. I decided to return to Perth but how? I didn't have money for the trip but I knew I could quite easily get a lift by hitchhiking. When I left the hospital, I was given some drugs like Valium and Librium. The psychiatrist said that I still wasn't healed and that I needed the medication. I almost didn't bother with my fears.

For the first few nights, I slept in phone boxes in anticipation of a truck that could take me to Adelaide from where I would take a lift to Perth. It would be a journey of thousands of kilometers. The trip was filled with cookies, pies and pasties, and sometimes I got some food from the driver. "On the way" to me meant "untied", "timeless", and it always gave me a sense of well-being. My eyes saw the desert and towns pass by, only punctuated by a sparse tree. Australia is such a vast country. Without a clear purpose in mind, I sat next to the driver in the cab. I did not talk much and fell asleep. I watched the sunset and in the morning, the sunrise. The time went by and I was now on my way to the city where a wife and two little children were waiting for me. I was left behind as a child. It had always been an obsession of mine to never do this to my own children. And yet, it happened.

24. PERTH (3)

I stepped down from the truck. I had arrived in Perth. Due to the long trip, my limbs almost forgot how to walk. During the trip, I felt

like a bird in the air that enjoyed its flight without knowing where to go. Once in Perth, it was as if I was cruelly awakened from a beautiful dream. With only a tube of medication in my pocket, I stepped into a totally different world. I planned to look for a house or a room, a job, look up the kids, and settle the divorce. I moved into a small room with the understanding that I would pay the rent later on. I found work as a used car salesman on a commission basis. One advantage was that I could have a car right away. However, the pressure to perform was immense. If you didn't sell anything, you could barely survive. So, I tried everything to sell the cars. I was so embarrassed when people came back with complaints. It was a battle of who eventually had to pay for the repair. If there were no customers, I had to polish the cars or charge the car batteries. Sometimes, I sat at my desk and sang my advertising jingles. My boss wouldn't hear of it. One still plays in my head after all these years: "*Feel free, free, free to drive a car from Key Key Motors.*" I wasn't suitable as a car salesman. After work, it was the custom that we went to the pub together for a beer. I never felt at home. I also had something else on my mind. A divorce was imminent. I had an ex-wife who hated me and children whom I could see only occasionally. Not being able to see my children made my heart cry.

I sought help and went from one doctor to another who prescribed me more pills. Sometimes, my dose of Valium and Librium was doubled. It was all to no avail. I wanted to die again. I wanted to get away from myself and everyone around me. Nobody understood me. My inner voice began to shout louder and louder, "Help me! Help me!" Nobody knew how, though. Sometimes, I drove to the sea, parked my car somewhere far away, and swallowed a whole tube of medication, hoping never to wake up. A few days later, I would be fine. This happened several times. I still had a glimmer of hope. These suicide attempts were not as severe as the first attempts. These efforts were more of a cry for help. I had two options—continue to work or get back in a hospital. Eventually, I ended up in Ward 9 of a general hospital in Perth, the psychiatric ward.

25. WARD 9

Ward 9 was known throughout Perth as the “crazy department”. You often heard people say, “Be careful, otherwise you’ll go to Ward 9.” There, I got a bed, food, and medicine. My case was stated as acute anxiety. All I knew was that this fear was very deep in my subconscious. The treatment itself wasn’t much. Over time, I got more freedom and I could occasionally leave the hospital. Sometimes, there was a van that took us on a nature trip. Another time, under the supervision of a nurse, we went to a movie theater. I also met David Sankar and one Phil in the hospital.

Several friends of David had worked in the oil industry somewhere in southern Arabia and in his youth, he suffered much trauma. Phil was an English veteran of the RAF with a pacemaker and had separation issues. Often, the three of us went on the road and discussed our problems.

One day, I was summoned by a professor of psychology. He was quite a big man who asked me one question after the other question, such as “What is love?” At the end of the conversation, he said that I was as empty as the bark of a tree. He also explained to me that our subconscious houses many things which can’t surface. That picture of the empty tree bark always stuck with me.

The big change came when I got in touch with Kingsly Sinclair, a clergyman of the Church of England. He had a new treatment called “psychotherapy” and proved to be a member of an international group of experts in this field. Kingsly was a gentle young man. He was a man full of love and compassion. For a few times a week, I had conversations with him in a small room next to the chapel in the hospital. He intently listened to everything I said. It seemed like everything came loose in me. The conversation went from one thing to another but he always listened with great patience. The dreams and nightmares I had that night, I recorded on a tape recorder which was next to my bed. I revealed thousands of emotions and events from the time I was a child. Kingsly always sat there with his head bowed and his hands under his chin, listening and giving me directions. I started to play the guitar and write songs. I wrote my emotions on paper. It was the beginning of a new path.

Because all those emotions were released, my mental condition deteriorated and I stayed in bed for days. However, Kingsly reassured me and told me that I shouldn't worry because this was part of the treatment. It seemed as if we had entered into a battle of sink or swim. Personally, I couldn't properly assess whether it was good or bad for me because everything was so new to me. Sometimes, a strange wind blew through my room which gave me a deep spiritual feeling. There, a new life unfolded for me. My repressed feelings revealed themselves through bitter tears and anger. I went looking for my inner child along with Kingsly who endlessly listened to me. Somewhere in my subconscious was still a very great trauma that I had suppressed that time. In the following sessions, Kingsly and I looked for its origin. It was my grandmother or my mother who had kept me under the water too long when I was being baptized. Did they want to drown me?

We intuitively felt that we were on the right track. Everyday, I felt like I was drowning and I made all kinds of crazy gurgling sounds. Sometimes, I called Kingsly in a panic and then we would have an immediate night session. Sometimes, I felt such a strong cramp in my chest. He would come to my room and talk to me. He associated the cramping with something I had experienced as a child during the war. Maybe it was a kind of pneumonia which had almost cost me my life. In order to get a better view of things, he applied regression techniques on me. One time, I went so far back in time that I ended up as a baby in the womb of my mother. I heard German soldiers marching past and I experienced the associated panic. During these months of therapy, I wanted to get in touch with my children and ex-wife. At one of the sessions with Kingsly, something wonderful happened. There was a strong wind, a kind of power from one corner of the room. It was a warm wind that came up to me and filled me completely. I was stunned because no window was open and I had no idea where the wind came from. At first, I thought it was the work of Kingsly but when I told him about this, he said he didn't do anything. After months of therapy, I tried to go to work and live independently again but I couldn't. I didn't want to live anymore. When it was really clear to me and Kingsly that my treatment in Australia wasn't

working, we discussed the possibility of going back to the Netherlands to work on my recovery.

26. BACK TO NETHERLANDS

My family in the Netherlands was willing to pay for my flight. I flew with KLM to the Netherlands in the summer of 1972. During the flight, I was extremely tense. To keep the tension under control, I took a good dose of Valium and occasionally drank a Bacardi. The idea of being reunited with my family after so many years brought both positive and negative thoughts in me. Over Schiphol was a dense fog and during the landing, the gear suddenly popped up and we immediately flew back up. What exactly happened, I didn't know. We couldn't land and had to divert to Dusseldorf. The reunion was therefore delayed 3 to 4 hours. Finally, the plane landed at Schiphol. There I was, dressed in a three-piece suit with worn trousers. After 13 years, I was back on Dutch soil. I was so confused by the whole situation that I got lost at the airport. I finally appeared in the arrivals hall half an hour later. The reunion with my family did not fail me. After a warm welcome, I could choose which of the three cars I would drive. My parents' home was in Hilversum where most of the other family members lived. They had reserved a nice room for me which had just been re-papered. Across the living room were flowers that made it look like a garden center.

In the first few weeks, everyone wanted to see me and talk to me. Nevertheless, I soon noticed that I no longer belonged with them despite the good intentions of my brother and sisters. I wasn't well-versed in the Dutch language and spoke to the chagrin of my father with a heavy English accent. Every week, I had to report to the Aliens department and stood there as a foreigner between the Turks and Moroccans. I wasn't even recognized as a Dutchman but a foreigner. My Dutch was still a little flawed. My sister Loes, who at the time was pregnant, once went with me to the Aliens department. The head of the department thought my sister was my girlfriend and I had made to be eligible for a residence permit because of her pregnancy. When we said that we were siblings, he simply didn't believe us. I had to really work on my future here in the Netherlands, I was told. Frustrated, I began to swallow pills and drink

again. As the summer came to an end, it soon became colder. I wasn't used to the inclement Dutch climate especially when it was winter. I also didn't get along with my father and he was the same with me. He was annoyed with my guitar playing and when I created songs with the tape recorder. He also suspected me of using drugs because I occasionally lit incense. At one point, the situation between me and my father had really become untenable. I moved to the house of my sister and her three children. There was no heating in the bedroom so I almost froze to death. Still, I tried to adjust to my new environment.

I started working at the local newspaper, the Gooi and Eemlander. I worked as a runner there. I cleaned the printing presses with kerosene. This was terribly dirty work. I hated that job but I had to stick with it because I couldn't get anything else. Being an employee with a little education and a poor command of Dutch was difficult. On weekends, I could be found in the barber shop of my brother in De Doelen in Hilversum. Sometimes, I assisted him by washing the hair of his customers. Among the clientele at that time was Rijk de Gooijer who was well known artist on radio and TV. Once I showed him my scrapbooks with all the pictures from my advertising films and performances on television. He was very interested in my work but my brother belittled me in front of Empire. My family believed nothing of what I had done in Australia. I absolutely got no recognition but distrust on their part. Especially with my work in the nightclubs, they found nothing good about it.

One day, I was at my brother's house reading a newspaper. It announced that Dorus or Tom Manders, my hero, had passed away. This was a huge shock to me. The feelings of drowning slowly began to return. My heart began to scream for help but my cries were not heard. It was work, work, go, and go. At one time, I heard the song *Daddy Do Not Walk So Fast* by Herman Van Keeken. It was a hit and every time I heard that song somewhere, I missed my children in Australia. Also, the song *House for Sale* reminded me of Australia and when I heard it, my heart cried and I sought relief from the pills and drank again. Gradually, the real situation in my family became increasingly clear. I became crazier from that situation and encountered my fears associated with uncontrolled gurgling reactions. I wanted to seek help as soon as possible but due

to the long waiting lists, I was not eligible for direct assistance. With my brother, I went to the home of the famous Hilversum psychiatrist, Van Helsdingen. I remembered that name because my father also sought treatment from him. I rang the bell and was admitted. During that conversation, I burst into tears. However, he told me that he couldn't help because there were long waiting lists. I felt misunderstood and saw no way out. One night, I ran out of the house without knowing where I was. I aimlessly wandered the streets of Amsterdam. Suddenly, I saw a big picture of a crying boy in a shop window. As a reflex, I picked up a stone from the street and threw it through the window. It was an act of desperation, a cry for help. Horrified by what I had done, I gave myself in to the very first policeman who happened to pass by on his bicycle. I spent that night in a police cell. The next morning, my brother picked me up. I was never convicted of this action and the insurance settled the damage.

27. PERTH (4)

Meanwhile, I decided to return to Australia. Actually, it wasn't a choice but a necessity. After arriving in the Netherlands, I realized that it was impossible to settle in with my family. There was a constant indescribable tension, a kind of confusion. I was sensitive to moods and felt exactly what was going on. I saw through flawlessly authoritarian relationships such as those that prevailed in the family. In order to gather so much information about my past, before my departure my brother and I went to Tilburg to find pictures from my baptism. Also, I went to the house of my grandmother—the mother of my father—because every time I saw her picture, I got frightened. I was in a panic and vice versa. My brother did everything to help me.

All in all, I was in the Netherlands for six months. In his Citroën, my brother brought me to Brussels Airport where I would fly to Australia via a stopover in Singapore. I spent a few days in Singapore. In the cocktail bar of the hotel where I stayed was a beautiful girl whom I fell in love with instantly. Her name was Pricilla. Her father was of Scottish descent and her mother came from Singapore. Hand in hand, we sat at an outdoor café until the early hours of the morning. I was in love and for the first

time, I felt good. However, it didn't last long. My journey continued and soon, I was on a plane bound for Perth, Western Australia.

The first thing I did in Perth was to search for a house or room. With the money I had, I was able to get a cheap room. It had a creaking old bed, a small table with a chair, and under the bed was my old suitcase which was clearly in need of replacing. The next thing I did was to contact Kingsly. On my first visit, I brought out a large envelope with photos of me in the Netherlands. We discussed what had happened to me in Holland in detail. I had the good fortune—or misfortune—to get into the nightclub where I had worked before. The owner had changed and the club was now called The Nanking. I worked there for five nights a week as a host for a floor show with singers, striptease acts, and a magician.

My contribution was to talk to each of the performers and in between, sing some songs and tell some jokes. I soon fell back into my old habit of Valium and Mogadon. The little Valium pills had different colors—the white pills were 2 milligrams, 5 milligrams for the yellow ones, and the purple ones were 10 milligrams. Normally, I took a dose of 30 milligrams per day. However, on bad days I took 50 to 60 milligrams. Because they worked so well, I became addicted. Everywhere I went, I always kept that tube in my pocket. However, something had changed. I staggered on stage and was afraid of falling. My voice had no strength and my singing sounded crappy. For the first time after all these months, I tried to get in touch with my ex-wife and my children. Unfortunately, I received hatred, misunderstanding, and rejection. Despite my conversations with Kingsly, my fears of drowning remained. The pictures from Holland had brought no solution. Everything was a big mess in my head. All kinds of things from the past were raked up. There was screaming and crying and more was tossed into the sea of emotions. As to what I did during the day, I only remember watching commercials on TV. The work in the nightclub was increasingly a rut and a challenge. With great difficulty did I manage to present every evening show.

At that time, regular acts from overseas were contracted. These acts went from town to town. I remember an Italian band that accompanied my performance in addition to their repertoire. One day, there arrived a new act. She was a stripper from Singapore. Her name was Zana and she was announced as the most exotic striptease dancer from the southern hemisphere. I fell in love with this beautiful young lady who was able to conquer any man's heart with her dark brown eyes, her toned complexion, and her black hair down to her hips. Every night, she performed her striptease as "Tigress" in a cage. During her show, she stripped off all her clothes which she wildly tore in pieces, leaving only a tiny triangle. That triangle was required because at that time in Australia, naked acts were forbidden. When the show was over, she got out of her cage and I stood with a cape in my hands ready to guide her to the dressing room.

Although it was expressly forbidden to deal with foreigners especially Asians, it happened anyway. On one of the two nights a week that I was free, I decided to take the plunge and go to her motel. When I knocked on her door and she opened it, I saw not only her but also the leader of the Italian band who was married and had children. She asked me to come in and I sat down next to a small table on which she had put a bottle of champagne. The three of us had a drink and we talked. To my surprise, the Italian left ahead of me. Now, we were alone with the rest of the champagne, the large double bed, the room service phone, and two days off in anticipation. The party started. It was a celebration I had never experienced before. The daylight was not for us and the outside world seemed to disappear. We made a lot of love which was broken only by the occasional T-bone steak and some strawberries with whipped cream from room service. Here, I was alone with a woman who managed to seduce men night after night and now, I was tempted as well. This moment of bliss, I didn't want to let go of. I was a frightened and confused young man who was desperately looking for love and had finally found his luck. The few nights I spent with Zana touched me deep in my soul.

The next day, I had to work at the nightclub. As soon as I came in, I was told that to see the boss. He told me that I was fired because of the forbidden relationship with Zana. How it came out, I didn't know.

Maybe he learned of it through the hotel reception or perhaps through the Italian musician. The feeling of drowning came back in full force that I immediately took a lot of medications which I washed down with alcohol. I decided to contact Zana again. I sat in my room and with a ballpoint pen, I drew the outline of my hand on a notepad that lay before me. Looking at my hand, I suddenly saw my fingers take the forms of my relatives and I remembered my parents leaving without me for the Netherlands. Suddenly, I saw the motel where Zana was staying. The sleek, elongated shape of the building turned into the shape of that big boat that my parents had left in. I was in a panic but I knew one thing for sure—I would see Zana and talk to her anyway! I decided to take my old car and drive to her motel. I would wait there until she returned from her work in the nightclub. I don't know why, but on the way to the motel I called the front desk and said that there was a bomb in the hotel. In this way, I hoped to get Zana to come out. However, they didn't believe me. They didn't believe the message and asked me what I wanted exactly. I hung up and called again with the same story. This time, they asked me if I wanted money or something. I just hung up. At the motel, I saw a police car waiting in front of it. I parked my car right in front of the entrance of the motel, got out, and walked towards the reception desk. At that moment, I was suddenly grabbed by two plainclothes detectives who immediately put a gun to my temple. I stood with the note for Zana in my hand. While everyone in the motel quietly walked past, I was handcuffed and taken to the police station. That same night, I was interrogated. Eventually, I had to sign a statement which said that I had tried to make a bomb threat. I refused to sign this statement because it was simply not true. I didn't hurt anybody. I was sick and knew it couldn't go on. It meant no work and no work in Australia meant no social security, no money, and no life. That night, I was locked in a cell opposite the police desk. In my best suit which I had put on for the occasion, I lay on a stone bed with only a horse blanket for protection.

29. DETENTION ON REMAND

The next morning, all the prisoners had to gather in a large cage from which we could see the town in the distance. On the other side of the

bars was the freedom that was no longer mine. I had to stay at the police headquarters until I would be arraigned. Depending on the decision, I would either be released or transferred to a prison until my bail was paid. Meanwhile, they tried to make me sign the statement but I kept refusing because I knew that I wasn't guilty of anything. The accusations that they had made were false. Whatever they said or did, I stayed with my refusal. The suit and shirt which I wore on all those days and nights were now dirty.

The conditions at the police station, especially the sleeping and eating arrangements, were so terrible. I was more than happy when I was transferred to a larger prison even with the uncertainty of my fate. Because I had no money, I had no lawyer who could defend my case. Since I was very confused, I was first taken to a large psychiatric hospital for examination. I ended up in a sort of bathroom with a huge old-fashioned tub with steel legs. I washed myself and was given some clothes. I was then transferred to Ward 1, which was the closed section for the crackling lunatics. Pretty soon, I was picked up and taken to the office of Dr. Bignolt, a dirty, little, sneaky male. The next thing I knew was I saw myself walking out of the facility. There, I met a bunch of inmates who were playing music with a guitar and started to sing. At that moment, Dr. Bignolt saw me laughing and singing. A few hours later, the police came to pick me up, handcuffed me, and brought me back to the police station. I was classified as a dangerous person with no family in Australia. Because of this, they refused to let me out on bail. I was taken into custody and placed in the Fremantle Prison. Every four weeks, I had to go back to the courthouse where I was re-examined or where my case was extended.

30. FREMANTLE (2)

Because I had spent four weeks of my life in this prison before, I knew what was waiting for me pretty much. To my surprise, there was a big difference. All the privileges that you had as a regular prisoner, you didn't get if you were in custody. So, if you didn't work, you couldn't buy anything like sugar, butter, jam, or cigarettes. The only way to get stuff was to swap items. Most of the inmates who were in custody were there

for only a few days and a few like me were there for even a few months. Under this heterogeneous group were many young, spiritual people who were caught because of possession of marijuana. Among these were sex offenders as well. One day, I read a big headline in the newspaper: "Dutch Baker Raped Woman". A few days later, I was sitting on the wall in the yard and fell into a conversation with a fellow prisoner. He was a Dutchman and a baker. Immediately, I remembered that headline. I asked him if he was that person. His story turned out quite different. His girlfriend didn't want him and called him a rapist. During the arrest, the police found a knife in his pocket. How long he was in custody and what subsequently happened to him, I don't know. I mentioned this case because like me, he was accused of something he didn't do. My fellow prisoners were rapists, incest offenders, and bank robbers. They were kept separate. There was the young man who had fallen in love with a girl under 16 years of age. He had slept with her and that was forbidden by law. "Carnal knowledge", it was called. This offense meant imprisonment for six months. Men were terrified of this offense and a girl under the age of 16 was therefore called a "jail-bait".

Three times a day, I took heavy medication to keep me calm. I was also given an other medication by the prison staff which we called it *Love Potion Number 9* because I was always knocked out after taking it. During the day, I walked around like a zombie. Occasionally, we heard that someone had hanged himself or slit his wrists. These were often the ones that used marijuana and were unable to cope with the pressure in prison. All that time in prison, I asked myself what I had done and why. I realized that the roles were now reversed. Night after night, as a free man I breathlessly looked at Zana who was like a wild animal caught in a large cage. Now I was by myself, drowsy and lethargic from the Librium and Valium, and trapped behind bars. My case was postponed eleven times which turned out to be quite uncommon. Sometimes, I felt the inclination to sign the statement which they had prepared. The law would prevail anyway, regardless of the consequences. The days and weeks passed. I was handed forms which said that I could hire a pro bono lawyer. Months later, a lawyer arrived and I told him my story. The days and weeks went by and I was the longest prisoner who was in

custody. I was becoming crazier from sitting all day, hearing the constant rustling of keys day and night, hearing the footsteps on the steel steps and seeing the silhouettes of guards who looked like Nazi SS in their jet-black suits. At night, we could hear the rumbling sound of the footsteps of the guards who checked to see what you were doing. No, we had no privacy. If anyone was accidentally caught jerking under or over the covers, he could count on some sort of punishment.

Despite all this, I had my moments of satisfaction, security, and peace. For example, I just quietly sat on my bed and read a book. Most of them were old books from the library of the prison itself. Sometimes, I got lucky and got a new book on loan from my fellow prisoners. Another moment of relaxation was the evenings when at nine o'clock, a small speaker sounded off some 78s with songs by Johnny Cash like *Down the Line*, *A Girl Named Sue*, or *Saint Quentin*. You would hear the whole prison which housed 1,500 men, sing along. This gave us a feeling of togetherness and unity.

Due to the constant pressure and tension, I became weaker. I had a cell on the second floor and one morning, I collapsed on the stairs. I was too weak to stand. I was transferred to the infirmary and there, I was like a little child who couldn't walk or talk. I just stared at the ceiling. I lay in bed for weeks. The new prisoners thought I was deaf and dumb and I let them into that delusion. The room had an old black and white television and when I saw programs with children, I cried my heart out as I felt the painful loss of my own children. Every week, I had to consult the prison psychologist. From the child who couldn't talk or walk, the conversation with the psychologist began with small baby words like "boat" and "car" and slowly, small sentences. As soon as I left the room and came back to the ward, I was that little mute kid again. Kingsly, my old psychotherapist, visited me a few times.

My situation improved after several months. I remember when I was in that infirmary, a major revolt broke out among the prisoners. Cells were set on fire, people were beaten, and they were brought to the infirmary. I was only a few hundred meters away from the danger zone. At one point, the whole building was surrounded by the army. This was big news and the whole course of the uprising was broadcast live on

television. This was a very strange sensation. It looked like war and there were lives at stake. Luckily, after a few days, everything went to rest. The following week, I was back in my cell.

After a few months, I felt a lot better and I volunteered to work in the kitchen. The work consisted mainly of washing pots and pans. This work also improved my living conditions. I got my prison jumpsuit exchanged for white clothes. I also got the best food there was like grilled T-bone steaks and chicken. Sometimes, we got so much food that I secretly smuggled some to my cell and distributed them among my friends. Another luxury was that I could take a shower. I worked seven days a week in the kitchen. When I worked in the kitchen, I didn't feel like a prisoner. The feeling only came back when I returned to my cell and the key was turned behind me.

One morning, we waited for the signal to clean our shit buckets. From the opposite cell, I saw John with a terribly bloody face. He was beaten up completely. The guard who discovered it took him to the hospital immediately. His nose was broken and had to be inserted with metal pins to fix it. John was convicted of incest towards his 15-year-old daughter. Sometimes, I secretly brought some pieces of chicken and some plum pudding for him. Among the prisoners, the sex offenders were outlawed. If they were beaten up, no mention was made by the guards. During the times we were allowed to get some air, we all sat against the wall or sat on the stone floor and we got to know each other well. In the middle of the field, there was a shed with wooden benches and tables where serious criminals often played cards for tobacco. Those who didn't have tobacco used their old tea leaves.

31. THE PROCESS

Finally, I was told that I had to appear in court. My pro bono attorney took the matter in advance with me and told me not to take any medication on the day I would appear in court. This was an ordeal for me because it meant no Valium, Mogadon, and Love Potion Number 9 before bedtime.

My cell consisted of an area of 1.20 meters. Only a small window gave light. You had to stand on a wooden stool to see the port of Fremantle

with the blue sky above. The large cranes, the water in the distance, and the people who were there suddenly seemed so small and infinitely far from those bars. I knew that port well. Every Sunday, I drove there with my wife and kids and we bought delicious fish & chips which we ate on the harbor. We always argued with the seagulls who circled around us with their screeching sounds. Those were the happiest moments of my life. I remembered my children, the cool wind that blew in, the water, the sun that always shone, and the delicious fish sprinkled with lemon juice. All these images flashed through my mind again as I stood gazing at the harbor while standing on the stool from my cell. I wanted to kick the steel cell door and escape the miserable life in prison.

The day I had to appear in court had arrived and the only thing I thought of was what punishment I would get. Would it be 5 or 10 years, or maybe just a fine? The latter kept me going. I was placed in handcuffs and taken to the police station in a police van. I changed my prison clothes for my own clothes. I couldn't use my tie for safety reasons and my belt was taken. Even the laces of my shoes were missing. Still, I felt like a king in my own clothes. The only thing was that my clothes stank. The courtroom was full of people. The prosecutors and the judge wore long black robes and long wigs. In front of me was the jury which would decide my fate. It all looked scary. I realized that there were people who just couldn't decide between life and death. Meanwhile, I had been without medication for a few days so my fears and panic came back in full force. From the police station, I was first brought to a space below the courtroom. In anticipation of my trial in the courtroom, I trembled and shivered in a big dark cell. Sometimes I was with other prisoners who had to be arraigned. I felt like a gladiator who was in an arena. In addition to my pro bono attorney, Kingsly was present in the courtroom. Furthermore, there were many students who studied my case. First, the indictment was read and then the witnesses of the other side were called. I had a witness and that was Kingsly, but he couldn't say anything because he wasn't a qualified psychologist. I was then called into the dock and I had to swear that I would tell the truth and nothing but the truth while the detectives told lies only moments before. Then, I was interrogated. Since none of the people who could testify before

me was present—Zana, the Italian bandleader, or Shaw, the psychiatrist from the hospital who had been referred by Kingsly—I was alone with my lawyer who didn't know anything. It was clear that the prosecutor wanted to see me condemned. Under Australian law, the defendant had to prove his own innocence. I had no strong evidence and my word meant little compared to the words of the police. Meanwhile, to impress the jury, my Italian lawyer brandished his robe like a real toreador. The tension was too much for me and when I had to be questioned as a suspect, I began to tremble violently and everything started spinning before my eyes. I saw pictures of me being confused and that my father came down on me with those big penetrating eyes. I realized that it was the prosecutor with his wig who strictly looked at me. I was so frightened that I jumped back and almost fell. Someone brought me a glass of water. The whole courtroom must have been in turmoil. In any case, I remember that Kingsly came running to stand with me. This was allowed under the condition that he would say nothing. Everything that happened after that I don't know, but the lawyer came to me and told me that it was all good. I badly wanted to take my medication but he refused. That night, I slept on a bed of concrete with only a thin mattress on it in a cell at the police station. For dinner, I ate soup that was like hot water with some faint wisps of vegetables.

The next day, I was brought back to the courtroom. It was 10 o'clock in the morning. The courtroom was full again and I felt ashamed of myself. I sat behind a table. I didn't feel well and tried to prevent myself from falling over. Again, I was summoned and interrogated. When I told the judge that a policeman put a gun to my temple during my arrest, the interrogation was briefly halted. The court had to first explain to the jury that this was done because of my previous conviction. This didn't work in my favor. I saw that my lawyer was not happy with that comment of mine.

What I didn't know was that they placed a psychiatrist among the people in the audience to observe me. It turned out to be Bignolt, a well-known and respected authority on the subject. He came to the conclusion that I was an actor and cheated the case. This conclusion was confirmed by photographs of a theater where I had played years before.

That was at The Playhouse of the National Theatre in Perth. There, I played the role of a madman in a piece by Marquis de Sade. From all sides, I was now attacked, but why? Why did I have to be condemned? This incident was followed by a brief summary and then the jury retired. I didn't want to listen anymore and awaited the verdict of the jury. They brought me down to my cell where I waited for a few hours. When the jury came back, they announced that I was guilty. The judge sentenced me to two years and six months minus remand.

Then, he asked me if I wanted to say something. I stammered the words "God forgive you because you do not know what you have done." Trembling with fear, I was escorted to the police station where I would stay that night. On the way there, I could hear the birds chirping and I saw the green grass and flowers. The world looked ravishing as with the sun and bright blue sky. With a sigh, I slept until breakfast was served the next morning—a thick slice of bread with lard.

After breakfast, I was handcuffed and put in a special police car. It had tinted windows so when I went out, the people couldn't see me. While the car drove through the city, I looked wistfully at the people on the street and especially the children whom I played *Demo the Clown* for a few years ago. Now, I was handcuffed and convicted, and riding in a police car without any contact with the outside world. I didn't hear or see what was written about me and my case. Back in prison, I was given my medication. After my conviction, I was transferred to another department where I sat between murderers and rapists. There was the young student who saw his girlfriend in bed with another man. Out of blind jealousy, he shot them both with a rifle. Luckily, I resumed work in the kitchen because I wanted a day off from my cell. I couldn't go anywhere anyway, so I just worked seven days a week.

32. THE PRISON FARM

Now that I was convicted, a few things changed. I got more sugar and jars of jam, but the important thing was that I could request to be sent to the prison farm. That place had a much freer regime. There, you were still called a prisoner but you were also a trainee and worked on a farm without walls or fences. Every week, a list with the names

of the prisoners who were invited to appear before a commission was posted. After a few months, I was called before the committee and the very next week, my name was on the list of the chosen ones. Finally, I could go exchange the prison farm for the open landscape where the cows grazed. It seemed unreal but it was true. I counted the days and hours. Slowly, happiness trickled into my soul. After about 13 months behind bars, I spent that day without handcuffs along with the other chosen ones. In a white van, we were brought to the farm. On arrival, we were given different clothing. The prison jumpsuits were exchanged for khaki clothing. There were no cells but small rooms which looked nice. Also, the food was not comparable to what we had in jail. Here, almost everything was fresh from the countryside. I was assigned to a small team of people who were responsible for the water supply on the land and around the farm. For five days a week, we worked with great water pipes and connected hundreds of feet of pipes. Once everything was connected, we turned the big tap and a large fountain of water went up to meet the dry, hot air of Australia. Sometimes, we went under it and drank it. Also, I planted tomato seedlings and after a few days, they grew and it was party time. Our team worked five days a week. Saturdays and Sundays we had free. Often, I just remained on the farm and I helped with milking the cows or I got myself a ride on the tractor. It was a new world for me. Unfortunately, it was momentary because on the farm, I kept suffering from panic attacks and had to resort to my medication. Once again, I was very anxious and distraught. I was brought to the small infirmary. Sometimes I was so anxious because I could be sent to prison again. Fortunately, that didn't happen.

After a few weeks, I was taken out of the group and I got an honorary role. On my own, I tended to the grass and rose bushes around the grounds and buildings. The guards of the farm lived a few hundred yards away in a small village. Sometimes I spent time with them. I then saw mothers who were playing with their children in the garden and slowly, my heart broke down. Occasionally, with a guard I went to a hospital in a nearby village. I mowed the grass while he watched over me. When the work was done, we had the rest of the day off. We sat in the sun and ate the sandwiches we had been given.

I was also appointed chairman of the residents. This meant, among other things, that I was responsible for making coffee and some goodies for the evenings. If the cookies we had baked were not tasty, these were thrown at my head out of anger. I also organized small concerts where I sang the songs I had just written like *Take a Look at Life and Be Grateful*. However, the inmates couldn't appreciate that song because of its lyrics.

In the course of time, I got to know more prisoners. One of them was John whom I became very close with. John was employed as a plumber. Like me, he loved music and played the piano. He looked better now as when we last met, he was beaten up and looked awful. His nose looked a lot better though it was still slightly crooked. We often sat against the wall at the entrance of the farm, talked, and rolled a cigarette.

While I worked on land and in the gardens during the day, I often heard melodies and lyrics in my head. John advised me to remember or write those lyrics and melodies and work on them in the library in the evenings. Some songs were actually very sad. They were mostly about my children, or rather the lack of them. One of those songs was called *Little Girl, Come to Your Daddy*. Another was titled *the Best Years of Your Life, I Miss*. A title like *Love Your Mom and Your Dad* had little appreciation from the residents. In addition to songs, I wrote little poems which spontaneously came to me.

Once every fortnight, Kingsly came to see me. We talked about what was going on with me. He was the only one who visited me there. Almost all other residents received biweekly visits from their wives and children or other family members. On Sundays, they were cozy with each other on the lawn which made me feel extra lonely. Such a day was always a feast for the residents until the time that the visitors had to say goodbye. Some tried to bring their wives into the woods to make love to each other. However, if you got caught, you could immediately return to the Fremantle Prison.

The Dutch baker, who was convicted of rape, came to work on the farm and baked fresh bread for us everyday. Sometimes, he even made English scones. He usually kept a few for me. These were still warm and I ate them with some jam and butter. It was a feast. On the site, there

was also a small shop where you could buy a few pounds of tobacco and candy.

With good behavior, you could be eligible for parole. The condition was that you had to work and have permanent residence. In the hope that he would work for me, I wrote to my old Russian friend Sam who was director of Lux Plast, the plastic factory where I used to sell my inventions. However, I heard nothing from him. When I was offered work as a hospital attendant, I took the offer with both hands. Through another Dutch prisoner who was jailed for theft, I was able to get a place to stay. His mother and sister came to visit him often. I got a room in the house of his sister. These people, Mina and Dick, were lovely people who treated me very fairly. They were very religious. I remember that Dick, who was a truck driver, often came home with things like a vacuum cleaner, which supposed to be fallen from a truck. Now that I met all the conditions, I could be released. Those last days seemed like weeks. I kept looking at the gate which was open, and I was tempted to run away. Everyone counted the days with me. I had to say goodbye to my past and find a new future. I knew that I didn't do anything wrong but it could happen to me again. I was determined to keep my own life in check. The last days crawled past. I mowed grass and sang for the last time with John on the piano.

33. FREE?

On the morning of my departure, I got back my own clothes and my Seiko watch that I had bought cheaply in Singapore. The dawn shone over the mountains and the sun rose slowly as I waited for the bus that would take me to the station in my dirty shirt and smelly three-piece suit. Around me were some residents and guards who came to see me off. I said goodbye to John, probably for good, because contact was forbidden with fellow prisoners during a provisional release. Our parting gave me a very strange feeling. I had become a different person. I was no longer "one of them".

I was brought to the station by the guards. I walked to the platform and the first thing I did was to buy some chocolate and a soft drink for myself. When I handed the seller my payment, it seemed like everyone

was looking at me. That feeling didn't last long. Slowly, I realized that the steps that I made now were footsteps of freedom. I could do whatever I wanted. I saw flowers like roses and grass. Also, I saw beautiful young women. A new life began. It was a new life but with a damaged soul. I had gone through hell and finally, the light began to shine again for me.

The home of Dick and Mina, where I took up residence, was not far from Fremantle. I had a room at the back which came out to a large garden. Sometimes, their mother came to visit. Usually, the conversations would be about God. She tried to get them to go to church but Dick would rather work on his truck. I got work as an orderly. A very special task was to retrieve deceased people. The nurses had these people all wrapped in a sheet. We arrived with a stretcher and with a big long box which the sides were covered with a curtain. Thus, the patients in the hallway couldn't see that a corpse was being transported. When we brought the body to the morgue, we saw occasional corpses on which autopsies were being done. This work was scary but also very beautiful and quiet. Sometimes, when we transported the deceased in a van and drove over a bump in the road, we felt the corpse move in the coffin. We would be terrified out of our wits. Not only for hygienic reasons but also as a kind of purification ritual, we carefully washed our hands after handling them. During this time, I started to write a lot. I heard lyrics come through me and wrote them exactly as I heard them. In my room, I wrote about my pain and sorrow and that gave me a special feeling of tranquility. Gradually, I got used to living in freedom again. I even did something Dick and what most people did in Australia, which was to gamble on horses. Because I didn't handle my losses well, I often gambled for second or third place which didn't yield as much. After a short time, I quit it.

At that time, Mina's brother was released. Once he was freed, he quickly went back into his bad habits. Also, he couldn't stand his mother's religious ways so he went off. The police were after him again. He was arrested and was sentenced to prison for several years. One day, his mother came to us with tears in her eyes. She said that her son had repented of his sins and was converted to God. He said all this in a letter from prison which she showed us. Dick and I had my doubts.

Although I enjoyed my time in the hospital, I changed my job when I got the offer to work as a sales manager for Lux Plast. Although the function sounded very impressive, the work wasn't. I immediately got access to an old car. Also, I lived at the factory so I could keep an eye on things. This saved me rent. Sam wanted me to make a promotional film for a kind of tennis racket with a ball attached to an elastic band. One day while at work, I encountered the director of the prison farm who asked me to come by the prison. So, I went to the farm every few weeks to visit my friends John and Frank. I always brought tobacco and a Sunday newspaper for them. Every time, I found it difficult to get back to work. I only noticed that I was in a financially bad situation when the bank refused to finance a new car for me. So, I had to drive around in that old station wagon. I remember that even the father of a friend of mine was surprised that I drove around in such an old beat up car even if I was a sales manager. He wondered what kind of plant I worked for that had its representatives drive in such a jalopy.

Meanwhile, the factory eventually declared bankruptcy. The plant was sold to a millionaire who bought the plant purely for tax reasons. I thus lost my job, my car, and my house. I often had contacts with people from the church. I soon found accommodation in the house of an elderly, heavily reformed Dutch woman. The room and the house were beautiful but all that preaching was against me. It was she who gave me Gibran's book entitled "The Prophet". For years, I left that book on the side until I read it later and found out what it all meant.

34. ROTTNEST ISLAND

Because I was without a job, I got the idea to go near the coast of Western Australia in the hope of finding work. I went to Rottnest Island. Upon arrival, I quickly found work and a home on a campsite where I had to keep things clean during the day. Life there was paradise. I didn't know what came over me. I had such energy and power that it scared me sometimes. In the evening and at night, I wrote in my tent and the words came naturally. It was as if an angel spoke the words and I wrote it down for her. Still, I suffered from major panic attacks. I told this to my

boss who understood nothing, of course. I rang for someone from the church to pick me up and by boat, I went back to Perth.

35. PERTH (5)

Back in Perth, I was picked up by Mieke. She was accompanied by a member of the church, who scolded me with “Jesus-this” and “Jesus-that”. I gave that same churchgoer all the lyrics I wrote on the island but he saw nothing and found them as the devil’s work. He tore them right in front of me. My confusion increased. They exerted pressure to convert me. It felt like God was punishing me. This was a Dutch reformed church which I didn’t understand. I began to feel guilty but on the other hand, I thought that God would have never intended this.

For my next job, I worked at a kind of Greek takeaway restaurant in a mall. The work consisted of roasting chicken and fish, and baking chips.

For this company, I made a TV commercial about chickens. I cleaned the chickens and then told the audience: “*These chickens cannot talk but I can, and I can tell you they taste delicious!*” In the meantime, my probation officer was changed. Mieke was going to work for the Aborigines and my new official was of English descent called Charles. He found that I could no longer continue to work because it was circumventing the tax at the Greek restaurant. Charles belonged to the English Anglican Church which appealed to me more than the Dutch Reformed Church. I got to know lots of fine people. One of them was Kevin, who at the end of the Mass waited outside with a church magazine. When he heard that I was out of work, he invited me for an interview to see what he could do for me. Kevin had several companies, one of which dealt in scrap metal. This company bought gasworks, demolished them, and then sold the parts. Kevin offered me the job of Marketing Business Development Officer. This meant that I would be his right hand. It was a dream job, one that was really too good to be true. I got a small office and a station wagon. Every day, I had to go somewhere and the only thing I had to do was report what I had seen. Every day, there was something new to report. One day, I put on a pair of overalls and sorted metals on a storage field. I also worked on projects with the Ichtus Organization which was a charitable institution. Sometimes, Kevin sent me to the beach to think

or to plan things. Kevin was a very progressive man. Occasionally, I felt like a spy when I had to observe workingmen on the premises. I felt that the job didn't fit me right.

I kept dreaming of how I could make my own songs and poems. I wrote to record companies and asked if I could present my work to them. I never got a response from them. However, my poems were occasionally printed in the church paper and that made me feel good. What did me more good was the fact that I saw my children weekly. When the children were with me, we had great fun cooking and singing songs together. I especially remember the lies of their mother and the problems with the agreements on the collection and delivery of the children. I also remember how upset I was when my kids said they had a new daddy.

Meanwhile, I rented a nice apartment in one of the wealthier neighborhoods of Perth called Applecross, not far from where my children lived. My contact with Kingsly was now broken because Charles didn't want me to have contact with him. He found that Kingsly's interference didn't do me any good. I was surprised by that comment and it confused me, too. I found it very hard to accept after all that effort, support and loyalty.

Meanwhile, John also came out of prison so I didn't visit the farm. He had rented a flat and purchased an organ. Every week, we got together and wrote songs. When we were so busy one day, words suddenly came as a kind of lightning through me. I called the piece *Try to See the World Through Someone Else's Eyes*. This overwhelming feeling, I wanted to share with the world. I told Kevin about it and he was impressed. He allowed the lyrics to be printed in the church magazine. When I helped him build a shed at his home, it seemed as if he had put the shed upside down. The windows were just above the ground and when I spoke to him, he replied, "Don't you remember what you wrote yourself? Try to see the world through someone else's eyes." He didn't build the shed for himself but for his children. Another incident was my encounter with the pastor during one of my performances in the church with John. During a Bible study, I sang a self-written song titled *Blow Out the Candle, I Can See the Light*. The minister was very angry about it. He thought I suggested the wrong thing. I knew that my spiritual side was revealed in my lyrics

and songs but these were not immediately understood or appreciated by everyone.

At work, my office gradually changed into a kind of small studio and I was constantly with my old tape recorder. One time I left the door open, I saw a mechanic in overalls that I knew from prison. He was then convicted as a rapist but Kevin still employed him. He had been detained for seven years. Not much later, I learned that he was imprisoned again, this time for theft. It turned out that everybody came back to prison and that gave me great anxiety. Why would one wait for so many years to be released to land in prison once again? I had this issue in mind and arrived at a conclusion—we were all looking for the key only to discover that the door was never locked.

36. RIVERTON WARD

In the months that followed, fear knocked at my door and again, those drugs increasingly brought relief. Every day, I tried to go on the road in my wagon but it wasn't safe to do so. My heart began to scream louder but nobody could help me. Eventually, I wanted to be voluntarily committed. Along with Charles, I drove to the Claremont Asylum, a place which was known in Perth as The Madhouse. Because I didn't belong with those fools, I was transferred to another hospital, the Greylands Mental Hospital. I was placed in the Riverton Ward, a department where they experimented with new therapies. The staff was simply dressed in nurses' uniforms. The patients here mainly stayed in bed and got pills. My stay in Greylands meant a lot to me because I met so many people who would stay in my heart forever.

The main building was surrounded by large lawns with trees. It could house about 40 to 60 patients, both male and female. The men's dorm was separated from the women's with a reception hall in the middle. There were a few small rooms where the patients with special cases slept. I now had a female psychiatrist, Dr. White, who was very nice. Whether she was really knowledgeable, I didn't know because she was still in training. Immediately upon arrival, I was introduced to everyone during the morning session. There were about 60 people in a circle. Next to me sat the head nurse named Tom Clayton, who looked somewhat reassuring

in his gray suit. My body trembled with fear and my ears seemed to be blocked at the sight of all those people. I understood nothing of what they all said. This seemed to be more common in people who suffered from anxiety. Tom saw this and said that everything would be alright. However, I felt myself getting crazier. Occasionally, Charles came to see me. We often went hiking and one day, I asked him if I was crazy. He replied that there was something wrong with me but I certainly wasn't crazy.

Slowly, I began to get used to my new surroundings and trusted more in it. Step by step, I went forward without treatment. I only took sleeping tablets when necessary. During the day, I was busy with crafts, sports, and spinning tunes. Each day began with a meeting that was always led by one of the residents. After such a meeting, the group was divided into groups of 5 or 6 where we could talk about our problems. In my group was Millie, a teacher who always kept her head down. There also was David Helfgott, a virtuoso pianist, whose life was portrayed in the famous movie *Shine*. The talks were quite superficial. It was often about what we had experienced the day before and was then briefly discussed. At that time, David complained that he wanted to return to doing big concerts as he had done before. David always sought recognition and affirmation from me because he knew that I had been an artist too.

Because it offered more privacy, I moved from the dormitory to a separate room which I shared with Bill, a man who had murdered his wife. One day, Bill suddenly pulled out a large portrait of his murdered wife. I was shocked and wondered how he could keep such a large portrait hid under his bed. Bill and I became good friends. It was a very good life in the establishment. We had lots of food, engaged in sports, underwent occupational therapy, and sometimes, we went out on a big bus for a whole day. There were also a lot of opportunities to showcase one's creativity which I enjoyed, especially painting. It gave me a special kind of mystical experience when I painted forms with crayons and smudged them with a piece of toilet paper so it seemed like they disappeared into the mist. Meanwhile, the nursing staff walked around, dispensed pills, and kept the place clean. For one day a week, some residents were given shock treatment and I saw them lying in bed with great fear in their

eyes because they were afraid. Some became very drowsy and distracted because they had lost part of their memory. Others were in very bad shape. I thanked God that I never had to go through that. It was bad enough to see. I found the shock treatment beastly.

In the group was Brigitte, a beautiful young lady. I remember writing the song *Mystery Woman* for her. She followed me everywhere but—out of fear—stopped every time she met a threshold. She had previously worked as a typist at the courthouse and looked very mysterious with her big brown eyes. She just looked at me and said nothing, almost nothing. Often, she grabbed my hand and took me to the large lounge and sat me down by the turntable. Then, she would put on the album *Jonathan Seagull* and *Hot August Night* by Neil Diamond. It was especially upon hearing the music of *Jonathan Seagull* that something spiritual came to me. Brigitte always did this and I kept listening. I listened to that record a hundred times and never did it bore me. Later, I would often sing the songs of Neil Diamond during my performances. David was very lively and always nodded his head in movement. One day, I asked David if he wanted to play a few songs of mine on the piano. I had a few songs which I had written and arranged in my suitcase. One song was called *Don't You Ever Say No* and the other was *You've Got to Love, Girl*. David put the music sheets on the stand and played the two songs consecutively. He played them beautifully with his stunning techniques. Also, I became friendlier with the staff and patients. Here, people from all walks of life were together in a building surrounded by trees, greenery, and the sky. Compared with the period in prison, this was heaven on earth.

In one of the morning meetings, a new president had to be elected. They had asked me to run for the position. Well, I had been in Riverton House for a few months and already knew the way there. After the votes were cast and counted, I was elected new chairman. This meant that I had to sit down in every meeting and bring about new proposals. It gave me a free and relaxed time. I played tennis or played some chords on an untuned guitar which had a few strings missing. Each week, Tom would come along with a bag of money and we got our pocket money of one pound per week, just enough for a pack of tobacco or an ice cream at

the kiosk on site. I saved for weeks for a new set of strings or adhesive for my dentures.

During a barbecue with the staff, I talked to a psychologist named Vicky Brown. Later, my female psychiatrist joined the conversation. She asked me if I wanted to sing church songs with my guitar every Sunday. She also introduced me to a new treatment called hypnotherapy. Before I could start it, I had to undergo a test first. It was a kind of intelligence test with cans, boxes, and ink stains. My IQ was found to be in order, so I could start with hypnotherapy.

In church, I played on the guitar known songs like *Cumbaja My Lord* and *Amazing Grace*. I was not so sure of my guitar playing so I played softly and sang louder. Some patients who came from the main building and were truly mentally-disturbed heard me sing and were sometimes so enthusiastic and loving. They started to touch and grope me which I found odd. The pastor loved it all and it gave me a good feeling. This pastor knew that Kingsly happened to be quite good. He was also of the opinion that Kingsly's treatment had worked.

The hypnotherapy sessions with Vicky Brown had now begun. I had to close my eyes and listen to what she said. While she took me under hypnosis, she stroked my arm and whispered words like "You're right, there's nothing wrong with you." Each session was the same. After such treatment, strange things happened to me. It seemed as if I had become another man. I was much more assertive as the lion or the stallion in me woke up. For example, that manifested itself in the morning session in which I suggested the staff to pull off their uniforms and wear commoner clothes because we weren't sick. Some agreed with me while the others didn't, like matron Marline. She said that we wouldn't be there if we weren't sick. I tried to explain that we weren't sick and that we only had problems that needed to be resolved.

When I presided over a meeting, it was as if I heard someone else talk. It was like I had gotten a new voice. I was allowed to say what I wanted. I became a different person and sometimes, that provoked protests in my area. I got more power as president and wanted to change plenty of things. I suggested that we make our own breakfast and occasionally cook for ourselves. The responses to those proposals were mostly enthusiastic. The

others came up with ideas like putting beautiful tablecloths and candles on the table. All of that wasn't easy and often, arranging everything came down to me. One breakfast, I made 100 dishes of eggs with bacon alone in the kitchen. One night, one of us cooked a Chinese meal because he said he had a lot of experience in doing so. However, the food wasn't really edible so I had to find an alternative solution for it.

My love for my fellowmen began to grow especially since I had found creativity in humans. I'm not just talking about the musical talents of David Helfgott but also those who painted, drew, or wrote poems. I suggested placing all these expressions in a kind of newspaper. The proposal was accepted. Someone suggested a rabbit as a symbol. We called the paper "Thump". Every week, the paper came out full of drawings, poems, and other stories. It was truly amazing what talent was in our midst. Later on, I heard that some people who even had a doctor's degree brought me the most beautiful poems. Others who walked around for weeks and never opened their mouths contributed the most wonderful stories. Everyone, including the staff, was amazed at what was there. Because I needed to do all these activities in a separate room, I was given the room next to my bedroom. During the day, I worked and in the evening, I played my guitar and sang songs in the lounge. Sometimes, I would walk around the building.

Vicky Brown, with whom I was still under treatment, was dumbfounded by my rapid progress. She couldn't understand how my situation could have improved so soon. Personally, I couldn't say what the treatment entailed other than the hypnosis, the caresses on my arm, and the positive messages. Full of energy, I threw myself into organizing all kinds of activities. I started an art show and I sold raffle tickets at the staff exit. I waited until the staff received their salary and then sold the lot to them. With that money, I bought LPs and a ping pong table for the lounge. I was so actively engaged that I didn't stay in bed even if the doctors ordered me to stay in bed for three days because of the flu. On one of those days, Charles came to visit. Again, I told him he had to change because everyone walked out of the church sermons. Charles was shocked by this criticism which I just blurted out. Meanwhile, I continued to write songs that Graham often recorded on an old cassette

deck. Many of the lyrics, I placed in Thump. During the evenings in the lounge, I tried out songs like "*If you want me as I am, then find me in the flesh on burning sand.*" Oh, I yearned to record and share my feelings with others, but the time wasn't ripe yet.

One day, a young woman went in the creative department to paint. She was incredibly beautiful that I was infatuated with her. Apparently the fire also burned in her because when she looked into my eyes, it was as if I had found my other self. She seemed to have come from another world and looked like a fairy, an angel, who shone with innocence and purity. The staff seemed to have seen what was happening between us because we were immediately separated. Maybe they thought that a relationship was not good for our treatment. These images, I always carried with me. I had never seen such a beautiful person and oh, how I loved her. Gradually, I began to be myself. My best suit, which had always been some kind of trademark of mine, I exchanged slowly for an old pair of jeans with a fringe and tear, a red polka dot shirt, and a cowboy hat. My voice began to sound fuller and deeper. Often, the cleaning staff listened when I was singing and I got a round of applause from them every time. Also, Vicky Brown told me that I was on the right track because my songs and lyrics became more beautiful, like "*I've got promises to keep and miles to go before I sleep.*" I lived as if I was on fire and did much.

Meanwhile, I had now seen my children several times under the supervision of a social worker. When they were with me, I took them to the park or the beach. However, the hatred and lies of their mother caused me great pain. Sometimes when I returned the children, she simply wasn't present. One time, I called her office to ask where she was but I was told that she had never worked there. It was things like this that made me distraught. When I was with the kids, yes, everything was different. I told them stories about Mama Bear and Papa Bear. I swore to myself that I would never leave them unlike what my father had done to me. Sometimes, we were eating in Pizza Hut and then the children talked about their new daddy. Suddenly, something broke in me and I felt that there was no more place for me in their lives. I saw the sadness in the eyes of my little son and felt his heart break. However, I myself

was helpless and couldn't help him. It was the helplessness that always made me distraught.

At that time, I had found work. During the day, I sold cars and in the evening, I stayed in the hospital. However, it didn't go well with me and I wanted another job. Something had to be done. I was ready to move back to society but I struggled too much with myself. At that moment, Anna, a Dutch nurse came up with the proposal for me to leave Australia again and return to the Netherlands. My first reaction was that I thought I was a coward because I ran away from my problems. She replied that I couldn't run away from my problems because they would always be with me. However, I didn't want to leave my children behind. I had fought for visitation rights, too. Would I probably get better care and treatment in the Netherlands? I also found it hard to leave all the lovely people whom I had met in Riverton House, especially Kevin and Charles. In the end, everyone was convinced that it would be better for me to go back to the Netherlands. I got in touch with my family in the Netherlands and they arranged my return trip. Slowly, I prepared myself for the goodbyes and the flight of 20,000 miles. Everyone knew of my decision. Some handled it pretty hard. The idea that I would never see my children hurt so much that I stuffed it away in the back of my mind. The doctors advised me to dress differently because my current clothing might get negative reactions in the Netherlands. I was shocked by that comment because I realized how much space they had given me here and how different it would be in the Netherlands.

I got so much warmth from everyone in the last weeks especially from Suzanne, the beautiful young nurse whom I was close to. Although it wasn't officially allowed, we still occasionally went out. She took me into her Volkswagen van which was completely painted with Flower Power flowers. We drove to her house with a fireplace and a litter of puppies. I sang some songs until we ended up together in her waterbed. Late in the evening, she brought me back to the institution and filled the attendance book that I had been with her. No one said anything. Oh, how could life be very different and beautiful? The world in which she lived, I totally didn't know. She made me feel that I was good and loving. I was okay as I was and that gave me a much more confident feeling. Inside, I struggled

with parting and letting go. I knew I would come back here but I never sang songs like *I Will Be Coming Back*. I also loved fooling myself with the thought that I would see my children again even if I knew that was impossible. I stopped my pain and tears. Kevin, who heard that I was going back to the Netherlands, copied all the work I had written in a copy shop in order to keep it in his safe. It must have been hundreds of pages.

I was in the middle of a breakthrough. Without medication, I tried to be who I was. I felt a kind of love in my heart and a kind of unconscious compassion for the people around me. That feeling gave me a lot of power. I saw people who were teetering on the brink of madness and I loved them. For me, they were all beautiful flowers like David, Millie, Susan, Graham, and Clive. I also became increasingly aware of the nature around me, the trees and plants. I started to get a different view of the world and understand what it was all about. I already made plans to deploy my poems and songs to the world. Now, I had no time for that as I had other things on my mind. It was time to say goodbye and start a new life in another country, a life far away from the land of the Aussies. The residents of Riverton House had collected some money and put it in a leather homemade bag. At the last group meeting, I got this as a gift. I thanked them and promised that I would buy a fountain pen with the money. With the pen, I would write to find the truth. It was a silver Parker fountain pen which I filled with green ink. That pen which is now quite worn and lays on my table with my Buddha statue. Occasionally, I hold it tight and when I close my eyes, I see all those beautiful people in front of me which burn my heart. In all my travels that would follow, I always had that pen with me, a silver Parker pen on which the words were engraved in lowercase: *Made in Australia*.

The day of parting had come. It was Sunday and it was the last time I was to sing in church. Charles, Kevin, Graham, and Suzanne would take me to the airport with the flower power bus. Just before we left, I managed to allot a few more vinyl records for the living room. Then, I said goodbye to everyone, including the staff. At the last moment, Tom Clayton, the head of the Riverton House, came up to me. I saw tears in his eyes and I couldn't understand why he was crying. Meanwhile,

there was a group of about fifty people around me. The car, which was to take me to the airport, was ready. When I drove away, I felt the tears in my heart. I looked back a thousand times at all the beautiful people with their warm hearts and their problems. In my pocket was a tube of Valium which my psychiatrist had given me. Before the trip, I violently protested but she persisted that I bring it. She also warned me about what I could expect like the reaction of my parents. However, she reassured me by saying that I could get the best treatment in the Netherlands. I remember that at that time, I thought everything was over and that I was already healed.

At the airport, I bid my last farewell to all those dear friends who had brought me there. As I walked up the ramp, I looked back once because I couldn't let go of these lovely people who were declared insane by society and who had become like a family to me. My eyes filled with tears. In one hand, I held my cheap guitar and my other hand held my small suitcase which contained some clothing, poems, and songs. I was headed for the Netherlands for the second time. Would it be better this time? Would it be different now? Like last time, I would first move in with my parents until I found my own room or home. Armed with my Australian passport, I let go of my friends and went through customs. I looked like a real Australian artist with my hat and my old faded jeans. I remembered what the psychiatrist had said about my clothes.

Chapter 3

Soestdijk (1974-1980)

37. RETURN TO THE NETHERLANDS

I flew on a Boeing with KLM. The Singapore Airlines flight attendants were always friendly and gracious while the crew on this KLM flight were just cows and unfriendly. The plane was half empty and after 24 hours of flying, I arrived at the airport where everyone, except my brother, was already waiting. At first, they thought I had become an alcoholic when they saw me coming down the stairs with a bottle of gin in my hand. I bought it as a gift for my father in the duty-free shop. Once I arrived in Hilversum, our home was full of people who gave good counsel and advice. Only this time, there were no flowers. There I was with my broken Dutch and my Australian nationality and nodded “yes”. I had made myself dependent and a lot had to happen before I could fully stand on my own. Yes, I had only five years of primary school. What was I worth on the Dutch labor market?

How else had I imagined my return to the Netherlands? I thought I would be warmly received but the reality was that I was called a liar and that they didn't accept me as I was. What the psychiatrist said about my clothing was true. Everywhere around me, I felt the lack of understanding and it began to seem like everything I had built up in Australia was lost again. This was mainly due to the authoritarian attitude of my father who disapproved of everything I said or did. He was trembling with rage as I went upstairs to my room with my tape recorder. Soon, my eldest sister and brother-in-law ensured that I got a job in Hotel Hof van Holland in Hilversum where my sister worked. My work consisted mainly of cleaning rooms because they didn't find me suitable for a bartender or waiter. One day, the head of the department came to check on my work and he saw some fluff on the ground layers which I forgot to clean. I thought that was ridiculous and from that time, I called my work “picking up fluffs”. Oh, how I hated that man and the work. I was barely in the Netherlands and I was already in the middle of situations

where I had no control. Nobody talked about anything, even my brother who had assisted me last time. This time he did not see me. His wife had a big mouth.

Every day I vacuumed, swept, dusted, cleaned toilets, and cleaned windows. My sister pressed me to do this mainly because I had a right to benefits, at least. I had never heard of benefits. With might, I tried to build a new life but I was locked up in a family where nothing was discussed. If there was something going on with you, it was in between your ears. I didn't see through all these roles that were so evident. Very slowly, I learned to see through them and I became aware of how the whole family was together. No one spoke to me or asked me about my children in Australia whom I missed so much. I also missed the beautiful people I had met in Riverton House. It was a real world while this was a world of hypocrisy and backbiting. However, I couldn't go back to Australia. No, I would now travel to Spain or Greece. There, I would sing and write songs as I had planned when I left Australia. First, I had to find my own property, a place I could call my own.

38. INEKE

Meanwhile, I had met a young woman who temporarily worked as a cleaner through an agency. I became friends with her and when I told her that I was looking for a home, she told me that there was a room available in the house where she lived. The house turned out to be a large villa in Soestdijk. I went with her a few times and go to know her landlady. After speaking with the owner, I got myself a beautiful furnished room. I could move in almost immediately. It was easy because I didn't have much, just some clothes, a tape recorder, and a guitar. My large room was filled with beautiful antique furniture. I heard that they would soon leave because they had bought an apartment villa near the palace. One day, while I was cooking in the communal kitchen, a beautiful young lady came inside. She was my age and introduced herself to me as Ineke. While I continued to cook, she sat at the kitchen table and asked me if I wanted a glass of wine. She brought out a bottle of wine from Japan which we eagerly drank empty together. Our hearts were soon ablaze. That night, two people joined together with a sense of "I'll never let you

go.” The next morning, she quickly got dressed because she had to go to work. Ineke was about to move into her new apartment which had to be completely re-decorated. Also, she asked me if I wanted to live with her. I said “yes” right away. Our relationship went so well that we decided to leave without giving a party.

I had taken on a new job at the NOS, the Dutch Broadcasting Foundation, at the Props Department. I got this job through an agency. The work consisted of breaking down sets after broadcasts. These programs often took place somewhere in the country so we often returned home in the middle of the night. I seemed to be doing well as I was requested by Props to take charge of building the sets which entailed a lot of creative work. However, the chief of the department talked to my new boss as he wanted me to work for him. I went to the head of Personnel and because I didn’t want to cooperate, my employment agency became angry with me. Tensions rose enormously. Eventually, I ended up sick. I had come to the Netherlands to work on myself but it wasn’t working. Ineke saw what was going on with me. I told her about my time in Australia and about my stay in prison. She also realized that I had to work on myself and she supported me completely.

So, some changes in my life came quickly like a new relationship, a new home, and a job. There were still some things that I had to handle like the great loss of my children. No matter how I tried, all of my attempts to contact them were unsuccessful. There was another big change. With Ineke, I was suddenly in a whole different world. The most beautiful change was that I was madly in love like never before. I received understanding and support from Ineke and together, we sought for help. Meanwhile, I sat with a benefit as unemployed. I wrote, painted, and made music in a small room. For the government, I was still a foreigner and therefore, I had to report to the police station at Soest. I had to answer all kinds of questions about my past and fill out an application form to be a Dutchman again. This time, it was certain. My stay in the Netherlands had to be successful this time. I noticed that I became more estranged from my family and began to build a private life.

Meanwhile, it was time to get acquainted with Ineke’s parents who lived in Bloemendaal. I wore nice white pants which were a bit tight

and a nice jacket that fit me well. I was keen to travel to Bloemendaal in my own Fiat 500. There, I received love, understanding, and warmth. However, immediately after the first meeting, I just made a wrong move and my pants tore open. Everyone laughed and I quickly got a pair of jeans from her father that was a few sizes too big. I was now part of a loving family, something I didn't know. During our conversations, her father said that he himself had become spanned a number of years ago and sometimes, he would roll on the ground in pain. He had moaned because of the tensions which he experienced while working in the Fokker aircraft factory. The first visit was a great success. I really liked her father right away. I saw and felt that the feeling was mutual. When we wanted to leave in the evening, my little Fiat refused to start. Her mother and father had to help push the car which was a very strange sight. A director of an aircraft factory was trying to jumpstart a little old Fiat 500 in the middle of the night. Later on, we often laughed at this first meeting.

39. SOESTDIJK PALACE

At the beginning of our relationship, I didn't feel comfortable when I realized that my girlfriend worked at the Palace. She had a big office with a canary and a small poodle which she brought to work everyday. I was told stories about the Prince and the Queen. They talked about very ordinary stuff and that made a big impression on me. As for me, I often felt very stuffy. At first, I thought that it had something to do with my heart. These daily attacks on my chest made me terrified. Our family doctor, who also worked at Soestdijk Palace, thought that it was my heart and prescribed a lot of medications such as blood thinners and under-the-tongue pills, but the attacks continued. Although my heart examinations yielded nothing, I kept taking the medication he prescribed. Ineke and her parents were worried about my condition.

When Prince Bernhard heard of it, he began to personally interfere. He suggested that for the next attack, I should immediately be brought in for further research to the University Hospital in Utrecht. With major complaints in my chest, I was driven by ambulance to the Utrecht University Hospital and brought directly to the intensive care unit. A

team of heart specialists led by Professor Meijler treated me. It was the same team that treated the Prince and the other members of the Royal Family. Ineke was very worried and called my parents to tell them what was going on with me, but none of my family came to visit me. I've never understood why. For days, I lay in intensive care. Ineke came to visit everyday and occasionally, I got a phone call from her. When I picked up the phone, I first got the reception of Soestdijk Palace on the line which then connected me to Ineke. This made a great impression on me and later on, I sometimes used this as a joke. When I was in people's homes, I let Ineke call me there and they were surprised that Soestdijk Palace was on the line.

Meanwhile, my situation didn't get better. I was dying and the doctors didn't know what was going on with me. I had one examination after another. One day, I was brought down in a wheelchair to a large study room where a team of heart specialists was waiting for me. One of them asked me if I trusted them and I said yes. They told me they were going to do an examination and that I wasn't allowed to stop until she said so. I was placed on a kind of loop machine, after which all kinds of wires with sensors were attached on my chest. I had to go running and continue until they would say "stop". I had barely begun to walk when my symptoms came up again in full force. I panicked but the cardiologists said, "Continue". I shouted back, "I can't" but I still had to go on. I really thought I would die at that time. Suddenly, the doctor pulled out a large sheet of paper out of the machine, looked at me, and said, "There's nothing wrong with your heart." The other three doctors confirmed it. I didn't know how to respond. I didn't particularly trust the doctors when I was returned to the intensive care unit. After a while, there was a young, little nurse at my bedside who just wanted to start a conversation with me when another call came from Soestdijk Palace.

Moments later, I was called by Professor Meijler who was in an unusually large room behind a beautiful desk. With a friendly tone, he told me that there was nothing wrong with me and that I had the strongest heart in the entire department. This he said so emphatically that I believed him immediately. He suggested for me to see a psychologist or psychiatrist. I didn't stay longer in the hospital. On the way home,

I drove to my favorite spot in the woods, called Peijnenburg in Lage Vuursche, and parked my car. I greeted the many trees that always gave me shade. I sat down on a bench and suddenly began to cry. Between the tears, I realized that Professor Meijler was right. There was nothing wrong with my heart. It was a purely psychological thing and I wouldn't have it anymore. I was ashamed of myself. A physical cause such as a heart condition was generally accepted, but not a psychological one. I stood there among my favorite trees. I saw myself standing like a tree without roots, with my arms as branches that reached for the sky, asking, "Where is God? Where is Jesus? Where am I?" My "I" was dying and no doctor could tell me what was wrong with me. No, I needed to redeem myself, but how? Ineke and her parents took my situation calmly and happily continued to receive me with love. For them, it was a normal thing which just had to be worked on and which just went by.

After Australia, my life radically changed. My children were never spoken of while I missed them. I had difficulty talking about them with my girlfriend. She was very concerned about my fate and that of my children's. Moreover, she was scared that once I had contact with my children, I might consider going back to Australia. In our apartment, I always longed for space, the space that I had in Australia. To compensate, I bought a big Ford like the one I used to drive in Australia. I used that to bring Ineke to and from the Palace. I received a special access card which enabled me to go in at any time, even just to drink coffee with her. She had a beautiful office. There were three desks, a few statues, rich carpets, and on the wall hung a number of paintings. The room had several doors and one of those doors led directly to the room of the aides of Prince Bernhard. Meanwhile, I was still trying to become Dutch again. The process would take at least five years, they said. However, it appeared that the repenting law could speed up the process. I don't know how it all worked out but after a few months, the judge in Utrecht ruled that I was Dutch again. This was an important event for me because it gave me more rights.

40. PAAZ UTRECHT

Meanwhile, I was referred to the psychiatric department of the Utrecht General Hospital. A young and very progressive psychologist named Loek Porter was in charge of the department. He worked with the latest techniques and therapies. After an initial interview, for a couple of weeks they asked me to come in day and night to the psychiatric department. They wanted me to unwind and watch what was going on with me. I soon realized that I had fallen into an experimental therapy group. The approach differed totally from anything I had previously experienced. The intention was that all of your problems were to be thrown out. If they are not automatically released, Loek always found a way to get them out. I found out that he made use of psychodrama and Gestalt therapy. Someone played your mother or your father and held a mirror, and then you began to cry spontaneously or fly into a rage. All these feelings that came up were then examined. This was my first time—after all those years of pain, fear, sadness and anger that were bottled up—that I finally found the road to recovery and healing.

After all those years of drinking pills and keeping my emotions in check, this was a revelation for me. Loek Porter was like Jesus who had come down to heal the people. Loek and his assistant Hanneke were not afraid of anything and found nothing strange or crazy. At the moment a burst of anger came, they managed to take out my aggression at the right time. It was something I was not used to. I had to learn to bring out my feelings from a great depth so I could scream at my mom or dad. The first time such a rage came loose within me, I kept ramming the pillows with my fists. Hell broke loose in me with great force. At one point, I yelled, "I'm hungry!" but Loek replied with a loud voice, "Go on!" Such an incredible force broke in me that afterwards, Loek said that he had almost never experienced such force. True or not, it sounded good in my ears. Because of all these techniques and exercises, the participants' feelings arose. This collaborative process also brought us closer together in which we found solace and affection in each other. We got a better understanding of each other because we learned from one another.

The first steps were aimed at getting closer to my inner child that was so bruised and damaged. Later, I began to see the removal of old soot

layers and the light could shine through again. After the whole process, I was able to breathe freely. The meetings took place in a large community room where we ate together and drank coffee. It had a kind of pub atmosphere but without beer. Thus, we had absolutely no idea that we were in a hospital. Besides the hard work during the therapy sessions, we put together a lot of activities such as cleaning, doing the dishes, preparing schedules, and as an internal client, we did many night shifts. We acted a bit like a social worker. One night when I was doing my rounds of the wards, my neck was seized by a pair of strong hands. It was William, a big guy who kept shouting that I had killed his sister. In a reflex, I tried to get away and in an attempt to get help, I looked around but saw no one. William kept shouting that I had killed his sister and his hands clasped tighter around my neck. He had a crazy look in his eyes. I choked and tried to tell him, "William, I am Luka!" However, it didn't get through to him and he stayed angry. There was foam in his mouth. I almost choked but I had no time to be afraid. I just had to get to a phone. I knew that the nearest one was hung on the wall at the reception area. At one point, I managed to tear myself away. I flew up the stairs and tried to reach for the phone. I couldn't because William ran after me and in a total rage, he threw about all the tables and chairs. Glass fell into thousands of shards on the floor. Thankfully, other people heard his ranting and came down. We tried to overpower him because we were afraid he would jump through the window and we were on the twelfth floor. Eventually, we managed to subdue William. He immediately got a shot and calmed down. Only then did I notice that my legs were shaking. For the rest, I had no problems. I thought that William would be imprisoned and every so often would get an injection. During the next therapy, I heard from Loek that this outburst had been a good thing and this breakthrough meant that William would be allowed to go home within days. Again, I didn't understand any of this. This was totally new to me.

It was 1975 and psychotherapy, Gestalt therapy, and bioenergetics in the Netherlands were still in their infancy. In me, the desire to help people and heal them just as Loek did began to grow. I started singing for the other participants when we sat together in a circle on the floor.

I played songs with my guitar. During the sessions, we cried, laughed, got angry, and we were kids again. It seemed like we were without masks and in all honesty, we showed what was in our subconscious and in our hearts. It was quite a different world for me. I also learned how to generate certain vibrations and how emotions that were hidden in those vibrations could find their way out. Once, Loek asked me if I wanted to sit opposite a young lady named Dineke. She was strictly reformed and educated, and thus stalled. I always had to keep saying to her, "Do you hear the bells ring?", referring to the church bells of her youth. In the beginning, she didn't respond but Loek insisted that I continue so I said, "Do you hear bells ringing? Do you hear bells ringing?" Yet, she still didn't respond. She suddenly came to me and gave me my hell. I ended up falling from my chair and got a bruised arm. Even if that happened, I kept yelling, "Do you hear the bells ring?" Luckily, they had placed a couple of pillows between her and me which she could strike to bring out all her suppressed feelings. There I was with my sore arm, but I was as proud as a peacock.

There were also moments of poignancy. On that day, Loek took me to an imaginary pond to feed the ducks. By doing that, he filled the hole of my real father in my life. It seemed that all was possible. Even saying goodbye to the deceased or the processing of grief that had not yet been processed was relived by the Gestalt therapy. He also asked me to walk blindfolded to develop trust. Unfortunately, my biggest fear was not removed. Sometimes, that fear only grew bigger and I had no explanation for it. The regime eventually became less tight. I didn't sleep at the department and drove my nice, big Ford to the meetings. In the evenings, I went home. Occasionally, we had psychotherapy for families an evening a week so that family members could experience what we were doing and what we experienced. My girlfriend was doing well at it but it came to nothing because she immediately assumed the role of counselor.

Meanwhile, I was already pretty well-established at Soestdijk. I became like a member of staff of the Queen and stood next to the borders and waved to the Dutch audience. Afterwards, we sat in the room of Vernerde, the private secretary to the Prince. Together with the staff,

we drank sherry of about thirty years old. Before the first sip, we stood and cried lustily, "Hurrah! Hurrah!" What a contrast from my past to be surrounded by the Prince and Queen. Soestdijk Palace was saluted by the military police. On weekends, I spent time with Ineke and her parents in Bloemendaal where we had a private room. I found it very pleasant to stay there. I really started to love Ineke's parents especially her father. He was an Officer and Knight of the Order of Orange-Nassau and had important public functions. He also fulfilled his role as president-director of Fokker but still remained humble. When I met him, he always had a twinkle in his eye which gave me the feeling that he fully accepted me for who I was. If I ever had a hard time and he saw that, he would say, "Oh, boy, did we have a time when we used our last money to build 30 aircraft which were all rejected by the government." While he said that, he watched the starlings which were eating the last of his apples on his apple trees. He showed me how life could be. Although he was a wealthy man, that was not evident in the design of his own bedroom. There was nothing special to see—just an old alarm clock, a reproduction of Rubens on the wall and on his bedside table, a small Philips portable radio which was signed by Frits Philips with a thick felt pen. In the barn, he always hung his old pants which he put on when he went to work in the garden. After such a weekend in Bloemendaal, we went home.

The next day, I went to work and my girlfriend had to go to Soestdijk as she was secretary to the Prince, who had just come out from the discredited bribes in the so-called Lockheed affair. The newspapers were full of it. At that time, we didn't know what to think. Because the Prince was attacked by the press and the media, my girlfriend felt that he needed to write a letter to explain his side. I wrote that letter with green ink and the fountain pen that I had received as a parting gift upon my departure from Riverton. This letter must have made a huge impression on the Prince because he sent me a personal telegram with the text, "My very warm thanks for your words."

I was still in therapy at the Paaz. I couldn't say that I noticed much progress. I screamed and did what was expected of me but the real breakthrough didn't come. Personally, I think it made me feel good but for me it was only a start. With all the role-playing and pillow-hitting,

my physical symptoms were diminished. But was this the way? It was hard to say even after three months. So, I kept swallowing Valium for my anxiety. Yet, I had the feeling I was finally on the right track. I would have to continue my treatment with a growth group, I was told.

I needed to talk about the loss of my children in Australia. They thought it was better if I let go of Australia and begin a new life here in Holland. What better than to marry for a new start? Ineke and I were married in the town hall of Bloemendaal. When I looked at the wedding photos, I saw myself wearing a suit from C & A and being surrounded by people, some of whom I didn't know. They were probably from Fokker and Soestdijk. It all looked nice and I remember that my father stood up during dinner and apologized in front of my in-laws because of the fact that I had no money, that I was poor. I also remember my father praise heaven for my authenticity, which to me was worth more than anything else. What was also very special was the call of congratulations from the Prince. As a gift, we were given a radio alarm clock from Philips. It was obvious that the wedding must have cost a lot. After eating, drinking, and dancing, I drove us to France for our wedding night with only a suitcase and a bag containing the money which the guests had presented to us. Also, there was a thousand guilders which my father in law had secretly placed in the pocket of my wedding suit.

Our honeymoon in France was a great success. We drove to the south near Bordeaux and enjoyed the lavish sun. I had brought my guitar and after having a few drinks, I played for the stars in heaven. I played "*Be free, I want to be free, there are many things I want to do today*". It was one of the songs which I had just written. I sent a few of those songs to record companies but without much success. The Prince tried to use his influence in broadcasting but it didn't work. Back in the Netherlands, everything went as usual. The Prince was still under suspicion in the Lockheed affair. We didn't put any blame on him and just stood squarely behind the Prince. We didn't talk about it. Ineke just went to work at Soestdijk with her poodle. The Lockheed Affair also affected our family. First, they were proud to have a daughter who worked for the Prince but now, they looked at things differently. For my father, this was a problem because he wanted to be grander than he really was. I was still on sick

leave and dabbled with photography, film, painting, and writing songs to keep myself busy. You would think that such a continuous flow of creation would make me glad but that wasn't so. I was still unhappy in a small apartment which made me feel confined. The only good moments took place in Bloemendaal with my parents-in-law. There, I felt really accepted. A calm always came over me in that garden with its beautiful flowers and plants which my father-in-law grew himself.

41. PSYCHOSYNTHESIS

Meanwhile, my soul was still full of fear. I swallowed Valium pills and tried to drink my sorrows away. One day, my music comrade Nico told me that there was a psychiatrist in Utrecht who conducted psychosynthesis in therapy groups. He was a pupil of Roberto Asiglioli, the Italian psychiatrist, who had developed psychosynthesis. I didn't know exactly what that therapy meant but I still wanted to gain happiness, have contact with myself, and turn my tears into joy. It all sounded good so I applied for an interview. It took several sessions to complete. In fits and starts, and with many tears and sighs, I told him my story. It was decided that I would be admitted to the group as soon as there was a place. Until that time, I listened to songs on the radio from Vanessa Williams like *We Will Continue*, *Sammy*, *Sammy Look Up* and *Let Me, Let Me Go My Own Way*. These gave me a lot of support and encouraged me to take up singing seriously.

After a long wait, I was able to join the therapy group which consisted of a dozen men and women. The group was co-led by Peter Koper, a Jesuit, who had just retired. I didn't know then that the same Peter would reach my soul. A new door opened for me and my luck was behind that door. I saw nothing and felt only the tears, desperation, and fear. I searched desperately for the light but no matter what I did, I couldn't find the switch. I didn't have the strength. Someone had to guide me when I entered the fight, and that someone would be Peter. Without knowing, he would become one of my best spiritual leaders.

In the first group session, I had to sit on a stool in the middle of the circle and close my eyes. Then, I had to imagine that I was in prison trying to free myself as soon as possible. Still with my eyes closed, I

gave a hard kick to the imaginary prison door and it flew open. Later, it became clear that it was not so easy and that there were still many Wednesday afternoons to take before I could say, "I can see the light on the horizon."

I still had a long way to go. I first had to tackle my traumatic past and the anger, distrust, jealousy, and guilt, which were trapped in me. I brought my inner child back to life until tears rolled down my cheeks. Besides expressing the pain and desolation, I found that all we sought was already present in us—we are the father, the mother, and the child. We are the trinity, the triangle, we ourselves are a unit. God is in us. Do you know why people who search for God often can't find him? It's precisely because God is in us but no one sees that.

42. WAREHOUSE—BAARN (1)

My wife and I (plus the poodle) wanted to move. I felt very unhappy in our apartment and she also saw that moving would do us all good. By the appreciation of the houses in that time, the prices had suddenly become three times as much. First, we tried to sell the apartment through a broker but eventually, I had to sell it through an ad in the newspaper. With that money, we bought a small, old warehouse in the center of Baarn. Actually, it was an old carpentry workshop where coffins were made. It took us a lot of trouble getting a residential license for the premises. After many months, we could work on our own little palace. Soon, I started my own recording studio and created sculptures. With paint rollers, I painted the whole front light yellow much to the surprise and annoyance of the residents. I also put new tiles in the tiny bathroom which fell off before the cement was dry. The building had two huge doors and the heating was provided by two giant gas burners which cost us a fortune. We slept in a dream bedroom of about 100m² which was surrounded by windows on all sides. We had a beautiful view of the trees where the birds sang their songs early in the morning.

While we were busy with our new home, I brought my wife to work every morning. At the gate, I had to show my card and then drove to the left wing of the building where her office was located. Because I did a lot of photography at that time, I always had a camera in my car. On one

of those mornings, as I was driving past the palace, I saw Queen Juliana standing by her window dressed in a nightgown and curlers. She stood with her nose pressed against the window and stared out at the snow that had just fallen. My hand immediately grabbed my camera but I didn't take any pictures. I thought it might have too many negative effects. Anyway, in my mind I already saw that picture on the front page of the *Telegraph*—"Juliana as Mother of the Fatherland". I was the only one who had seen this and maybe that was a good thing.

It was around that time when my parents came to visit us at the warehouse. They had heard a lot about our new home. I took my father upstairs to show him my little recording studio. I possessed a large Akai four-track recorder which was very special at that time. I pushed a microphone in my father's hands and said, "Sing something, Dad." He replied, "What shall I sing?" with a clearly emotional voice. Suddenly, a song came to me. I had heard him sing that song to me when I was a child. The song was originally from Indonesia and was called "Tabe Tabe". I pressed the record button on the tape recorder and with tears in his eyes and a voice full of emotion, he began to sing. His voice rasped as if he was singing in a professional studio. After he had sung the song a few times, I added some reverb to it. We could also make a duet of it. So, we sang the same song together. It was a touching moment in my life, and also for him. I had touched his soul and made a small part of his great dream come true for him. There he was as he had always wanted to be, with a full voice, the attitude, and his chest forward. The whole thing was something beautiful. However, it was also pathetic and I almost felt sorry for him. After recording I gave him a copy to take home with him. I myself lost the recording, but after the death of my father, it appeared again. Thus he can now be heard on YouTube and so echoes the voice of my father for anyone who wants to hear him. It was the least I could do for my father who had no father.

I went deeper into therapy. First, it seemed that I wouldn't make it and that the whole therapy would be a fiasco. However, it turned out to be a slow growth. Peter threw everything in the battle for me and put everything on the road to happiness. The more I looked at him and saw how he treated people, the more I saw a sort of God in him. Meanwhile,

he was running his own group along with a doctor in training. Most of the group members were men and women from the emergency services such as social workers, psychologists, and teachers. The greater my fear was, the better Peter could treat me. The more tears, the better. It seemed like the world was upside down. Instead of swallowing and choking, I had to completely expose myself here. If that didn't work, Peter knew a technique so I came in contact with my subconscious. He called this "the pit that will bring the shit up". That pit was so deep and scary because you never knew what was coming. Everything had been suppressed for so long. First, all the shit had to be taken out and processed before creating space for growth and development. That way, you came closer to your soul. I saw the change in the group of people around me. Their eyes lit up again. Their faces changed from bitter to sweet, from anger to love. It was a transformation that everyone underwent. I started to feel that I was growing. There was a seed in me that was germinating. I saw it for the first time and the others saw it in me, too. However, things went slowly. Like a surgeon, Peter cut very gently but firmly all the malignant neoplasms in me. Day and night, he was ready to fight with me. I can't say what treatment or therapy exactly gave the best results. Each part had its value but the part that really made me working again was my inner child, the little boy in me who was injured and oppressed. By becoming a child again, you get the opportunity to be yourself once more. In this inner transformation, you are reborn, literally as a child born again.

I felt like a little kid that was starting to walk and experience things. From a huge depth, I was working on my self-acceptance. I was busy re-educating myself and learning to stand on my own. Sometimes I fell back but there was always Peter's hand that helped me to stand up. It was about accepting who I was and who I had been, and that wasn't easy. The point is that you must become aware of the clouds that can prevent your light from shining.

For two and a half years I was in psychotherapy every Wednesday from 14:00 to 18:00. In turn, we sat on the stool and worked on our problems. Sometimes, it got pretty ugly. Each session brought out a lot in me. It sometimes happened that I had to call Peter in the middle of the night. He was always there for me and we drove to his home in Utrecht.

He lived in a large room where a piano stood. An old confessional booth, he used for storing bottles of wine. If things got too heavy, he played wonderful music on his piano. I will never forget those moments of love and loyalty. The knife cut deep into the flesh of my soul but I knew I was on the right path. I discovered more about myself. Not just my lyrics, but also my photography, paintings, and sculptures gained more depth and content.

It was the time I got interested in Vincent van Gogh. Increasingly, I looked for a mirror to find my true face. I also painted and sculpted though these seemed nowhere compared to Vincent's work. However, the sense of struggle and the passion must have been the same. Like Vincent, I was looking for recognition not only in my paintings and sculptures, but also in my writing and songs. However, looking at his paintings and reading his letters made me scared and terrified. It was in the months that I went deep into therapy when I decided to go to the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam. Now, I had already seen paintings by Vincent van Gogh in the Kröller-Müller Museum. I remember when I came face to face with a self-portrait of Vincent. I felt such an overwhelming fear that I ran out of the museum with my wife behind me. I was already a little further into therapy and together with Ineke, I went inside and we looked at his beautiful paintings. I studied the dots, lines, curves, and bold paint daubs. Suddenly, everything started to turn into a great whirlpool. Once outside, my fear subsided slowly and didn't leave Amsterdam just yet.

We decided to go to Madame Tussaud's. There, surprises met me once again. First, Dorus was suddenly in front of me. I stopped by him and said, "Hello, Dorus. I miss you. I wanted to play the small Dorus but my father took me to the sea. I'll never forget you. I've even played you in Adelaide and Sydney." Yeah, I was there with a big heart of love and loyalty because in my heart, I felt like a bum. Also, I was just looking for my true self. "Goodbye, Dorus," I whispered softly. "Thank you so much for everything." Still full of Dorus, I carefully stepped into the darkness ahead and saw one famous person after another.

Then, it happened. I was scared to death because suddenly in the dimly-lit room was Vincent, now more real than ever. I wanted to run to the exit but something stopped me. I looked deep into his eyes and felt a vale of tears. I saw the hell he had to go through before he took his untimely end in his own hands. I looked at his hands which made all these wonderful paintings and letters to his brother Theo. I saw that he was a wanderer like Dorus, searching for unity and love. Then, I looked at his feet which had brought him to Belgium and France. For a moment, I was no longer afraid and naturally, I got tears in my eyes. In psychosynthesis, I imagined him with closed eyes. The love flowed out of me, my fear vanished, and my heart was filled with compassion for this man who wanted to say what we couldn't understand. I wiped my tears from my cheeks and this time I whispered, "Thank you Vincent, for what is unnamable." I saw him in others who also painted like the young woman in Australia. She was so clean, pure, and beautiful. She was also a "Vincent". It was then and there that I decided to get to know myself better because there were so many "Vincents" in the world who were maligned, misunderstood, and so alone. The week after this incident, I told the group what had happened to me in Amsterdam.

In our group was an editor of the magazine *Sphinx*. He sometimes published writings from me. I was allowed to take pictures for a documentary for the university. All this gave me the chance to go to work on the layers by myself. It would ultimately determine the direction of the road I would go. I was also into photography and sculpture. When I saw Peter at work, such love came to me that I also liked psychotherapy. I only had five years of primary school. My whole life, I had been living with the idea that I was stupid and that I couldn't learn. In the meantime, I continued with my sculptures at my warehouse but my desire to go with people became stronger and stronger. While I wrote one song after another, I looked for a way to get work as a counselor. I had seen that the first respondents themselves underwent a similar therapy as part of their training as a psychotherapist. I could start being a facilitator for free. Because of the many treatments and therapies, I had gained a lot of experience and knowledge in that area.

I understood what they were talking about and now spoke their language. Sometimes, I assisted Peter with the sessions. One of the exercises that I most remember was shining an imaginary sun on the inner wounds that needed to be healed. That had to be done very carefully so that your heart wouldn't get burned. You would learn that you are your best surgeon. Under the guidance of a therapist, you could go down into your basement where it was dark. I can't express it differently. If it was hatred or anger towards your father or mother, you let your light shine until that hatred began to melt and the true person would naturally emerge, the person who you really are.

In retrospect, I often wondered if Peter knew exactly what he was doing and whether he paid enough attention to the religious, the divine, the spiritual side. Only much later did I discover that many who had followed the path of psychosynthesis would develop further in the direction of spirituality. This therapy laid the foundation for higher growth in ourselves that could only lead to the divine and the truth. I saw a lot of light in me but most was still in the dark. I will never forget the words that Roberto Assagioli wrote in his book "Psychosynthesis" in 1922—"Help me. I know that there is such a thing as higher consciousness but I don't know exactly how to find it." I felt what he meant. I wasn't a scientist or scholar but we had the same experience. For two and a half years, I had this therapy every week with a group of people who mirrored each other. The long faces became shorter, the dull eyes had rays, and closed hearts were opened again, all because of love. I felt my body slowly begin to flow like a river. It was a time of great changes and revelations. At that time, there was a woman in the group who asked me to go to her house because she wanted me to meet her husband. Her husband turned out to have a high position in the banking industry. Through this confrontation, it became clear that a world of difference existed between her group therapy and the daily grind at her home. At one point, she sighed against her husband, "Ah, you were like him." We were aware that we were dealing with very important issues.

Meanwhile, I got my motorcycle license and bought my first motorcycle, a 1000 cc Honda Goldwing which I tore off the roads. The stallion in me awoke. It was the time of tough motorcycle riding on my

Honda, my woolly socks, and my leather bag over my shoulder. It all looked very impressive. When I went to get an ice cream at the Oudwater bakery in Baarn, I sat there on a bench in my tough leathers without tears and proud as a peacock. I was proud of myself and learned so much that I could achieve anything despite my fears. Slowly, the time came when I would leave the group. "Find another group to grow," they told me, but no one knew where and how. During the final session, we talked about what had changed in my life. My creativity had grown and my inner life was richer. Nevertheless, I remained seated with grief during the last treatment and no one understood why. That insight came only on one of those days I underwent treatment. I sat alone with Peter and burst into tears again. He asked me to return deep inside, take an imaginary walk through the woods, and observe all those trees. Peter suddenly said, "You are not your tears!" He repeated it a few times and suddenly, as if a light switch was flipped, I saw that I was not my tears. I was not my past. What I was, I couldn't say but my tears seemed to slip away. Instead of tears, I saw a light like a huge sunlight. What was I then? That was the big question I had to answer for myself. Through this experience, I started getting more serious in preparing for a future as a counselor. In a local newspaper, I read that in Soest, there was a psychotherapist in my neighborhood who gave weekly therapy in groups. After an initial meeting and some interviews, I started as a co-therapist and sometimes did some practice sessions. It was a scary but beautiful moment when I stood on the other side of the divide for the first time. I remember my first experience as a therapist. My first patient was a burly woman whom for years had not been in touch with herself. I took her into the depths of her own "cellar" and discovered that she had to undergo an abortion long ago. Through that experience where she became aware of her situation, she began to flow again.

My life began to take shape. My soul was slowly becoming visible to me. I licked my wounds and saw how others were still trying to discover from theirs. I heard the voice in my heart and said, "Take my hand and come with me. I know where the sun shines. It is yours and yours alone. Do not look for the light somewhere else because you yourself are the light."

The light acts as a mirror to us. It shows us our true inner face. It shows us who we really are. The true face is beyond our emotions. It's not easy to get there but once we're there, everything seems so obvious and so simple. It is a journey to the horizon. It is an eternal journey. You will never arrive. The journey to yourself is the journey of your life, and the journey itself is your life. Although for many readers, these thoughts might sound vague and woolly. I can't omit them because it is part of the understanding and the joy I felt at that moment. It is the joy of finding a diamond that sparkles in the sunlight. This story's my life, my truth, and every man has his own truth, his own life story.

43. SOCIAL ACADEMY

Meanwhile, I was a social worker and a volunteer who went to work on a crisis carecenter in Soest. Those were hectic times. I rode my Goldwing motorcycle with my beeper bag which could go off any time. I was ready to go to counsel a drunken man who had just beaten his wife. I would speak to a child who had run away from home. I would give advice to a woman who wanted to commit suicide or would talk to people who felt lonely. I loved this profession or rather, this voluntary work. One day, I was called again and with the police, I went to a family in need. We found havoc when we arrived. The whole place was in shambles. The police shouted at me, "Do something, sir. Do something!" to which I replied stuttering, "I'm still learning." Back at the police station, an official report was made of the incident and it literally read "Sobered by bla bla of the police" and that was it. There I was as a counselor with my big words. I saw that I still had to learn a lot. Every week, the cases of the past week were discussed. At one of those meetings, I was asked casually where I had my education. With all my innocence, I told them that I only had five years of primary education in the Netherlands. They were astonished and asked me to talk to the employment office to see if I could apply at the Social Academy for an education. When I got to the office and told them what my training was, at first they thought that I was joking. When they eventually saw that I spoke the truth, they suggested that I take a psychological test. Then, they sent me to the director of the employment office. I appealed to the Supreme Court

in Utrecht who approved of my plan and I got the financial support to study at the Academy of the Social Horst in Driebergen.

I applied and got a stack of books. I went over the history of the labor movement and feminism among others. Inside me, I heard a voice which said, "This will not save you", so I just flipped through some books. On the day of the entrance examination, I felt small among all those people and I always heard another voice inside me that said, "You're too stupid. You can't do it." After a few weeks, I got the results. I was not successful but I could retake the exams. This result still gave me a sense of security because I knew that I hadn't studied hard for the entrance exam and still came far. I managed to pass the re-examinations and I was admitted into the Academy. With my leather shoulder bag and now a beard and long hair and my woolly socks on, for a couple of times a week I tore on my motorcycle to Driebergen. I sat in a classroom with a group of twenty students which was a totally new experience for me. It seemed like I was in the belly of the beast as I landed with all those angry people most of whom followed their own tails. Suddenly, after my therapy with Peter, I missed the depth of my own inner experience and that of my fellowmen. However, when I started on this, they said that I had to keep my mouth shut. I could never talk about psychotherapy because we were training to become social workers and not to know ourselves. Actually, I didn't realize what I had entered. I thought it would be an extension of my therapy group but that wasn't so. Slowly, I experienced a voltage of anger and disappointment. Here, they didn't grow or got to know themselves when it was something that I saw as a prerequisite for exercising the role of rescuer.

During the lessons, my head began to turn literally and figuratively. I decided to ask the psychologist about this. He explained that I was just angry and advised me that I just had to throw my thoughts out. One day, during a lesson with some feminists, I was so angry that I struck my fist on the table. I screamed of what I really thought of them. I said they were working to suppress themselves and were therefore not free to be a woman. The result was that the group broke down. When I was on my way home on my motorcycle one night, I cried aloud and said, "Who am I, anyway? Who am I?" I appeared to belong nowhere and if I really

wanted to work as a social worker, I had at least three and a half years to go at the Academy. In the second year, I went on an internship and passed it. In the third year, I would get supervision and be able to deeply address the problems of people. The latter prospect kept me going.

One day, I heard that a group of Vietnamese boat people from our village was moved. My heart went out to those people and after all the terrible images on TV, I wanted to do something for them. I wanted to go and help them not as a counselor but as a friend. I met two Vietnamese on the platform of the Baarn station. I got in contact with them and my heart popped open. One was called Lee and his friend was named Van Long. Lee invited me to their shelter for a drink. From that moment, the doors to a new world of friendship and love were opened. Soon, I was introduced to the world of these people who had endured so much suffering but could still afford to laugh. The shelter was located in a large villa where there lived about 40 Vietnamese men, women and children. Some were married while the others lived alone. The atmosphere was a strange mix of tragedy and joy. Behind all those lovely, smiling faces were probably millions of tears that were hiding. Immediately upon entering, my heart burst open to them to never close again. I felt right at home with these people who chewed on some cooked chicken legs. Here, the people had gone through hell. Slowly, I got to hear and see what they had been through and I discovered what was hidden behind their smiles—murder, robbery, rape, their last gold teeth torn from their mouths, the disappearance of family members, and so on. I still remember how a little girl of three years came to me, took my hand, and guided me into a room where her mother was crying on her bed. Another time, we sat in a circle on the floor. Somehow, I felt close to them. Somehow, their suffering was my suffering. As we walked on the beach at Zandvoort, we looked out over the sea and got tears in our eyes. I cried because I missed my children in Australia and they did so because they missed their families in Vietnam. It was an incredibly beautiful time. Occasionally on Sundays, my wife and I invited them to our spacious warehouse where we held a barbecue in the garden.

Meanwhile, my first year at the academy was over. In the second year, I had to undergo a compulsory internship program for at least 20 hours

a week. My work with the Vietnamese was not official so I had to find another job. Fortunately, I soon found a job at the hotline in the Gooi where I first had Transactional Analysis. I went on training for 6 months. I learned to always play to the client's desires so that we ourselves would remain unaffected. The client wouldn't find out who we were in order to prevent things from running through each other. I absolutely couldn't reconcile myself with that process. I thought it was wrong to paralyze people and constantly address their weaknesses and deep emotions. For me, it was mostly a huge learning experience. I noticed that I was constantly a victim as that they could exercise power over me. By only having inner knowledge and awareness, these can save you from such manipulations. At the academy, I felt more unfortunate than those feminists with their hatred. I felt more and more of an outsider in the academy.

It is a known fact that people can grow apart and that relationships can fade. I felt that this was happening between my wife and me. I saw the situation with the palace as a sort of fair. The posh talk of some staff and all the stories that I heard at the academy about the royals didn't make that particular picture rosy.

Deep in my heart, I didn't know what it was. I was looking for the truth in myself, the truth of life, God, and Jesus. The figure of Jesus came closer and closer. One day on the Dam in Amsterdam, someone talked about Jesus. I was looking for the real Jesus—what he thought, how he really lived, and what he had really learned before he went to preach. Also, I began to delve into the mysteries of Egypt, Francis of Assisi, Atlantis, the Indians, and the Shroud of Turin. When I visited an exhibition about Mark Twain, I suddenly felt a sense of recognition but I didn't understand why. I felt more and more attracted to the spiritual realm. I kept looking in books and museums in the hope of a clue, a direction. Jesus was always close thereto. When I thought of him, my heart was filled with love.

44. EEMBRUGGE

My marriage was on the rocks now and despite our friendship, we decided that it was better to part ways. I left our big warehouse. Finding

another suitable home was not so easy. In Nederhorst den Berg, by chance I found a very old abandoned houseboat whose windows and doors were broken. When I found the owner, I traded this 17-meter long berthless houseboat with an Akai four-track tape recorder which I bought for 400 guilders. Through this exchange, I became the proud owner of a house on the water. I was only without a spot. Finding that was the next challenge.

I soon found an illegal spot in the harbor of Eembrugge near the village where I lived. The houseboat had to be dragged which didn't turn out as easy as I thought. I needed a certain license to be allowed under bridges. Another problem was that this shaky house boat had to be towed until IJsselmeer and that was not without danger. Once it was docked, the boat had to be refurbished. I painted the doors and windows with white paint which I mixed with sand, so it looked like an ancient Greek house. It also had bright blue tires and rims. Life was good, really good. At night, I rocked on my double mattress and listened to the lapping of the water against the boat. In the distance, I could hear the ducks quacking or a boat passing by. On one wall hung a large portrait of Francis of Assisi which I bought at a flea market. On the other wall was an old priest's robe with an image of Mother Mary. It was the beginning of a spiritual journey. I couldn't explain it but that for me was very clear and obvious. If someone had asked me then, "Luka, have you seen Jesus?" I would have definitely said, "Yes, a few times even." However, nobody asked me. Maybe they had declared me crazy but I started to get to know myself better.

Despite our divorce, my wife and I were good friends. Our relationship became better. Together, we had a house and a boat. My boat had become our country. And so, life went on. I went from the second to the third year of the course and became increasingly unhappy because I came across so many misunderstandings. One night, it was too much for me. The whole group was sitting opposite me and our psychology teacher said we had ended up in a stalemate. Neither side made a move so I remained alone, just like always. That night, I rode my bike with newspapers under my jacket against the freezing cold and frozen tears on my face.

Life is a waterfall that flows continuously and finds its way without a destination. There isn't a destination for anyone, anything, anywhere. Everything goes on in you, me, the flowers, trees, birds, and offspring. Where once there were tears, a smile arises sooner or later. Where it was dark, light flashes once again. It was obvious to me that I had to find the truth in myself, in others, and in the church. I wanted to know everything about Jesus, who he was, and where he stayed between his 14th and 33rd year because that was a blind spot for me.

I started skipping classes at the academy. What I had to learn and the supervision that I got there had no meaning for me. One day, I confronted one of the teachers about this and he began to cry. He said, "I can't" again and again. They tried to get me back but I refused and went on alone. The telephone hotline where I had worked for two years threw the ball back. When I spoke to the leader then, he gave the ball back to me but I no longer picked it up. At the academy, I suggested discussing this dilemma and it turned out that I was right. Then, I decided to say goodbye to my job at the telephone company.

My third year at the academy was a fiasco. I was required to do an internship. Looking for a new internship at that time was almost impossible due to the large number of students who were looking for the same thing. I began to realize that this was no longer my way and if I was successful, I would probably end up at some municipal hall behind a desk. I remembered the remark of the caretaker of the program. He said that I didn't belong in the training of social workers and I saw that he was right. At the end of the third year, I joined a class for massage in order to experience energies. Women had to touch me and I had to consciously undergo and experience it. I didn't like all those hands on my body and especially the energy that was behind those hands. It wasn't for me hands of love or tenderness but grabby hands. I refused to continue to participate in the mission. The consequence of my refusal was that I wouldn't get my exam and hence couldn't advance to the fourth year, the last year in which I only would have to write a thesis. I felt so misunderstood so I walked out of the room. They ran after me but I told them to "buzz off".

I got on my bike and went straight home. It was my last contact with the academy. I wrote a farewell letter to them. One of the teachers wrote me back. "Let the source of life not dry up," he wrote in a final attempt to persuade me to come back to the academy. My warehouse was named "Bron Van Leven", which means "Source of Life". I remember that I wanted to place a sign on the wall. It seemed fun to paint these words in typical childish handwriting. I asked a couple of neighborhood kids to do that for me. When they were done, it made me proud when I saw the result. It read "Baron of Life". I found it a real joke so I nailed the sign to the wall. Because of all the hassle and the fact that I failed the final examination of the third year, I decided to quit the academy and find new ways to broaden my scope and skills.

Chapter 4

Under the spell of Bhagwan (1980-1981)

45. BHAGWAN

That new way presented itself by a guru by the name of Bhagwan. Somewhere in the Netherlands was a psychiatrist who wrote a controversial book about psychiatry entitled "Not Made of Wood". It was a bestseller and was thereby acquired on radio and TV, and was widely publicized. This psychiatrist was named Jan Foudraine. He had been in India with the guru and was so gripped by the lectures that he gave classes on this subject back in the Netherlands. I still remember the great impression that Jan Foudraine made on me. He had just returned from India and was wearing an orange robe. On his chest was a mala, a necklace with a photo of the master, Bhagwan. I attended one of his lectures and I immediately thought that he knew the world. After the lecture, I asked him if I could record the following lectures. He felt good and I remember how I listened attentively to what he said about death and life. The first recording of his lecture was for me a new kind of music. My heart further opened with delight and recognition. On that same night, a video about Bhagwan was shown. My first thoughts were that this man was on drugs as he rolled his eyes and kept looking up. Somehow, his words didn't come through to me. So many conflicting thoughts occurred to me—the man was out for my money and he wanted to hypnotize me. I didn't know if the others felt the same thing. The audience of about fifty people was comprised of social workers, doctors, psychologists, priests, and ex-priests. After I handed the tape to Jan Foudraine, he patted me on the head. I felt very flattered by that gesture. I asked him, "Shall we do this again next time?" He replied, "Yes, next time!"

The beginning of a new stream was tapped, a stream of love and compassion. On my houseboat, I was busy with new songs and poems which I recorded on my new four-track Tascam recorder. It was all quite religious in content. Also, the musical part was not perfect and I soon realized that not everyone would appreciate it. If I wasn't busy sailing, I

was in our warehouse with my ex-wife. We grew apart and went our own ways because we increasingly learned the writings of Bhagwan which stated that we had to let each other go free.

The lectures were held in a center where many of Bhagwan's followers, the sannyasins, lived and worked. These people often had shining, beautiful eyes and were so open. I also saw that they were just ordinary people. When I set up one time the equipment for a lecture, one of the residents became so angry that he smashed his plate to the wall. All the junk had to be cleared before the first guests came. This was very confusing for me because I was looking for a heaven on earth and this incident totally did not fit that image. However, there was something intangible, something with great love, and I felt like a big bee who was lured by the sweet honey. On the other hand, it made me afraid as I had come so close to the truth. There were the prejudices and the smear campaign that was unleashed by the media to discredit this group. It was a cult where everything revolved around sex and money. I soon saw that they barely had enough money to survive.

I was particularly attracted to the teachings of Osho and the lectures by Jan Foudraine, the recognition of that "Aha!" moment. Slowly, it became clear to me that if I was ready for the truth, it would just present itself. All truth is already deep within us. We just need to see and experience it. My God, what a discovery. It was so simple but also so difficult to grasp because my vision was so clouded by conditioning and socialization processes. The soot layers must first be erased before we can discover ourselves. You have to do it yourself. No one else can do that for you. Another is you can't repent until you yourself are ready. I saw it happen before my eyes. People were touched, including me. Although I felt that this was the truth, in the beginning I felt quite uncomfortable among all those people who looked like an Arab or Ayatollah Khomeini in their orange clothes and their mala around their necks. When I made Jan Foudraine's recordings for the second time, he snatched the tape from my hand and this time, it was without thanks and without a pat on the head. For a moment, I thought "What an asshole", but immediately afterwards I thought, "He had a reason for doing that." So, I continued listening to his lectures.

Bhagwan and his followers were constantly in the news on radio and TV. Sometimes there were positive reviews but most were negative. Meanwhile, a lot of Dutch had joined the movement. I also wanted to but didn't dare because I was afraid of the reactions of the people around me. I also saw that all these prejudices were unfounded. I saw sincere people from all walks of life, very learned men and priests, who were all working on something new. When I was sleeping on my boat, I suddenly woke up and saw faces carried by the wind and the windows banging. They were the faces of the sannyasins whom I met within the center. Such a thing had never happened to me before. It was like a magic trick but to me, it felt as if some higher power was trying to make something clear to me. Some time later, it happened again.

One day, I spoke with a woman who was in charge of the Bhagwan center. She showed me a wooden box which I was not allowed to open as it contained a few hairs from the beard of Bhagwan. When I asked if I could just hold the box, she looked deep into my eyes. When she handed me the box, something strange happened. My whole right arm began to vibrate by itself and the rest of my body was filled with an unprecedented light of love. Was it my imagination or a trick? Was it real? For me, it was something familiar. It reminded me of sensations which I had experienced during my psychosynthesis sessions. Even then, it felt like a light came to me. It took only a few seconds but it seemed timeless, endless. For a moment, I felt I was in a sea of light and heat. I know it sounds strange and unreal but there's no other way I can describe it.

Although I was on the way to love and light, I didn't really feel at home at the center. I was still a bit uncomfortable and reserved. I heard them proclaim things like "drop everything", "release all" and "you are not your feelings". That was totally not in line with what I had learned all those years in therapy. Walking in red clothes with a mala totally appealed to me. There were stories about free sex with each other or in groups. Meanwhile, Jan Foudraine (Amrito) became more prominent especially for the books he wrote as Amrito. His work was acclaimed by small groups but were also rejected and given brutal criticism by many. I had experienced so much rejection and criticism in my life so why should I expose myself to these again? Still, I remained fascinated by the

figure of Bhagwan. Who was this little man with his Rolls Royces and Rolex watches with diamonds? I looked at his picture when I saw him on TV. I felt the enormous appeal of his eyes. I began to delve into his books and writings about immortality. My eyes were opened slowly over the seven chakras and these seemed to open doors for me. I was inducted into the paths of consciousness and the road to nowhere. Soon, this road was full of obstacles and risks. A lot of courage was needed to take this path. Slowly, I began to imagine what it would be like to be a sannyasin and walk around with red clothes and such a chain. I felt that it suited me. Meanwhile, my wife, who was also very interested in Bhagwan, had already signed up to be a sannyasin. We decided to go to Amsterdam where a large boat, the Ametap, was at the wharf. It was where the first Bhagwan Centre of the Netherlands was established.

Tense and somewhat nervous, we went inside. What we saw were people in red robes and with smiles on their faces. I was just a spectator then. Many questions were asked and the answers were filled in a form which was then sent to India. For me, it would take a while before I could make that step. at first I was very reluctant to take such a big step. At that time, I regularly visited a small Bhagwan commune in Soest called Almatas. An ex-priest named Sidarta was in charge of it. One time, I asked him to look at some of my poems and writings. To my horror, he commented that only Bhagwan could write about such things. I was so shocked by that comment. It didn't help that I was already so insecure about my work, hence all of it disappeared into the closet. Because of this incident, my feelings of rejection from the past came back. There were also times where I was praised for my work in Beverwijk when I sold some of my writings on the Black Market. Yet, I continued to feel insecure. I was still in the growth process. Slowly, the idea of joining Bhagwan was brought up again. I wrote a letter to Bhagwan in which I honestly told him what had happened to me. Bhagwan had moved to America at this time.

After weeks of uncertainty and nervousness, an answer finally came. We were just in our warehouse conducting a session for a bioenergetics group. The shouts and cries could be heard and the neighbors complained that we seemed crazy. I told the group that we had to stop but also told them that I had great news from India. I had received a letter from Bhagwan which said that I was accepted as a sannyasin and that he had given me a new name, Alok Gayaka, which meant “singer of light”. I can’t describe what happened to me when I opened that letter. Something touched me so deep inside. It was as if someone had looked into my soul and placed a red rose on my unhealed wounds. It was as if someone had whispered a song of love to me. It was like someone said, “I know you and this is your name.” That someone was Bhagwan. At that time, the light was so great that I could hardly contain or accept it. The new name was such a hit and my heart kept shouting, “No, this can’t be true!” His message touched me. He told me that he brought a new concept of God into the world—that God is love, and God is pure joy and gladness. He said that everything that happens is good because everything that happens is done by God. At first, I did not understand these words and it still took a long time before I could penetrate the highest form of truth. With tears in my eyes, I told all of this to the members of the bioenergetics group. Ana Gita, who led the group, saw that I found it hard to accept my new name. She advised me to stand in front of the large mirror in the living room and say out loud, “I am Alok Gayaka, singer of light”, but I couldn’t. Whatever I did and no matter how I tried, it didn’t cross my lips. I got the gag reflex every time. I let out all the resistance first. When that was over, she asked me to stand in the middle of the group and sang a song of Bhagwan which was recorded on tape. It was a very bubbly song and everyone sang and danced around me. It had been years since I had sung for people. Very quietly and hesitantly, I was able to express my new name, Alok Gayaka. A new man was born, reborn.

Officially a sannyasin, I first had to report to the Bhagwan center in Utrecht. A date was set for my initiation as a sannyasin. It would take place in December. It seemed like a preparation for a new life. At that time, I had a lot of contact with Jan Foudraine. I told him about

my initiation as a sannyasin and the new name that I had received. I remember that he said, "You're not your name!" In the meantime, we provided him a room in Baarn. His relationship with his girlfriend had just faltered and he was looking for new housing. The intention was that Jan Foudraine and I were going to organize lectures, seminars, video nights, and meditations in our center in Baarn. I would capture everything on video and audio, convert these to tapes and cassettes, and sell them. Before that, I had already thought of a name—Red Lightning Productions. We would also hold lectures in the country and also in Belgium and Germany where Amrito was now well-known. Because I was the only one who had a car, I drove Jan Foudraine to those lectures. For this, I had to paint my car red. Our center began to get busier. More volunteers came forward and before I knew it, there were about 10 to 12 guys in our warehouse. Ads about our center and activities were placed in the newspapers. The interior of our center soon adapted to the new tasks. There were mattresses along the wall and there was now a blackboard, a TV, and an audio system. Later, a video camera was added. If we were short of money, we just sold some antiques such as furniture, silver, and china.

Prince Bernhard occasionally asked where Ineke was. She had reported sick and said that she needed rest. He understood nothing of it. Ineke also walked around in a red dress with a mala around her neck. She also had a new name, Ma Anand Copika. "Copika" means "beloved of Krishna". Her full name meant "bringer of love". Our days were filled with no plans or agenda. Also, no records were kept. We believed in providence and lived in the moment. I remember how surprised we were when the first customers came in, those who had responded to our first ad in the newspaper. The ad worked. Every Saturday, we had about 10 to 20 people and during the week, we traveled around the country, gave lectures, and organized video evenings. It was a hectic life. In the center, people came and went. We never had peace. Our center had become a real business which dealt with a lot of money. There was only one problem: there was less money than what was expected. I tried to compensate by typing out Amrito's writings. Meanwhile, we had good contacts with the book publisher Ank Hermes, who oversaw the publication and distribution of

our video and audio tapes. In our lectures and video evenings, we also proved to sell a few books and tapes in spite that the income was just too little to keep the stocks rotating. Gradually, it became clear that the whole center was working only for Jan Foudraïne as his unpaid staff. At one point, my wife sat all day at the typewriter while Jan Foudraïne and his girlfriend took everything in. As one of our criticisms for this, it was stated that it had something to do with your past. No one had a grip on the situation. At the same time, in the state of Oregon in America, Bhagwan pounded the floor on a piece of undeveloped desert where they were going to play the most terrible things.

Meanwhile, the date of my official initiation as a sannyasin came closer. I struggled with whether I should cheat by moving from Bhagwan to Jesus. A few hours before my official entry, I drove to my favorite spot in the woods near Lage Vuursche. It was the place where I always went to meditate and be still. I felt that I wanted to be alone and sought contact with Jesus to explain that I needed a living master at that moment. I asked permission and while I was there, I suddenly felt the presence of Jesus around me. Not that I saw a figure in front of me or something, but I just knew there was something. Suddenly, I heard a voice that said, "No, I don't mind if you go to Bhagwan. It'll do you good." It seemed as if I was crazy but that was absolutely not the case. I was in my right mind. My heart was filled with incredible love and grace. Tears of joy rolled down my cheeks and with Jesus in my heart and Bhagwan so close, we drove to Utrecht where they were already waiting for us. On the way, I told my wife what had happened to me. She replied that she had felt that experience, too. We agreed that it was good.

When we arrived in Utrecht, I was immediately surrounded by men in red robes. Many of them had already been to India or America and had met Bhagwan in person. What struck me was they all looked so radiant. When it was my turn, I was asked to come forward and take my place in the middle. The other sannyasins sat around me. In the background, a swami played beautiful music on a guitar and his voice sounded like that of an angel. "*We are flowers in your garden, we are lovers and your friends, Bhagwan...*" the song went. After I told the audience what Bhagwan had written to me in a letter, I received my mala with

his photo hung around my neck. It was an incredible experience that touched my heart so deeply. It felt like coming home to a place I had so longed for. Tears of joy streamed down my cheeks and while the music was playing, the others danced around me. My heart shone much light. It felt good and I thanked God that this had happened to me.

When the ceremony was over, we had pea soup. Then, we went back home with a festive feeling in our hearts. I was officially Alok Gayaka, all dressed in red with my mala around my neck and with the same bright eyes. The old life had settled and a new man was born. In my ears, I heard the voice of Bhagwan, "Everything comes from God and there is no guilt." Even Jesus laughed along. With renewed energy, I went to work even harder to tell people who Bhagwan was and what Jan Foudraine had to tell people. The entire media had to be mobilized for this purpose. However, I noticed that a lot of lies and criticisms appeared on TV and in the newspapers.

The lectures, seminars, and video evenings throughout the country were a huge success. The small rooms which we rented were always full and often proved too small even to give everyone a place. Amrito spoke with a lot of knowledge, but there was one thing he clearly had less knowledge of—business. Despite the success, less money was still coming in than going out. In addition to the financial problems, we also had to deal with criticism and great opposition especially from Christian angles. Armed with a cross on their chest, they often sat on the front row and I sometimes feared for Amrito's life. Sometimes I felt more like a bodyguard than a supervisor, but Amrito himself was never afraid. I was afraid that something would happen and that we couldn't finish our mission. One evening, Amrito gave a lecture to the staff at the mental institution at High Laren. We decided to take the train this time. We were picked up from the station by the chaplain of the institution which we found strange. When we entered the main hall, we were met by a variety of psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers. Jan Foudraine and I sat down on the scene. He sat in the chair next to me and I was with my recording devices and microphones, ready to record everything. When Jan began to talk about what religion can do to people, I saw that everyone was listening with an open mouth. Seated at the first row were

the chaplain and the board. First, they sat neatly upright but when they became more intrigued, they increasingly slid down. They were totally enchanted by his words that they forgot their own bodies. Jan was always good but that night, he was at his best. At one time, a hard cry came from the back of the hall. A man rushed forward and exclaimed, "That is the devil!" I stood there and was beaten by stupidity. The man ran over to Jan and squeezed Jan's throat in an attempt to strangle him. For a moment I thought, "This is a unique record. It will sell!" I saw that Jan was very calm. Just when I wanted to give this man a blow with my microphone rod, he let go. I looked at Jan and saw a huge compassion in his eyes when the man was discharged. "Look, this is what I mean by what religion can do to people," Jan said to the audience. It was such a masterstroke. The audience was overwhelmed, including me. That evening, we were taken to the train station by the same chaplain. He didn't speak to us and I got the feeling that he was glad that the evening was over. When he was gone from sight and we just stood there on the platform, Jan and I began to roar with laughter. Tears rolled down our cheeks. We felt like two naughty boys who did something bad. When we were on the train, I closed my eyes and saw the face of Osho with his famous smile. A little later, we got off at Baarn station. In our red car, we drove to our warehouse where everyone was fast asleep.

In addition to this traveling and organizing, I still found time to connect with my vocals and backing tracks. I began to learn songs like *My Way*, *New York, New York*, and *You'll Never Walk Alone*. I had the strength to sing this repertoire. Many people around me saw that I was sitting in the back with the commercial songs. What I didn't know was that I would go back to that same repertoire and thus earn my living. In addition, I was engaged in the Inner Light Show where I also made use of existing well-known songs such as *I Believe in Angels* by Abba. Although I spent a lot of time on it, the show never got off the ground because the idea itself was not really whole. However, the urge to sing and write became stronger in me. In our warehouse, I looked for a quiet place to do so but I couldn't because Ineke always knew where to find me. Jan also demanded more from me. After months of collaboration, I began to see that Jan's power within the group was too large and was in

fact counterproductive. No emotions were tolerated. Sadness and anger were suppressed. Despite his good intentions, I felt that everything was wrong not only financially, but also emotionally. He worked using his head rather than his heart. At one point, he couldn't tolerate music and it irritated the hell out of him when we sang songs of Bhagwan. I kept getting the feeling that I wasn't supposed to be there. I saw through the game more and more. I had the feeling that this was not right. The Bhagwan center in Oregon, which was built by followers of Bhagwan in the desert, was surrounded by walls and guarded with guns. I got the same anxious feelings when I listened to the sermons that Jan held each morning.

I tried to be "in the moment" and stay there while Jan went back to thinking. There were no thoughts. I was completely thoughtless and it felt pretty scary. Another time, I was in a moment of bliss that I felt that I was relieved until I tripped over Poekie the cat and shouted "Goddamn!" When I was with Jan, strange things would happen. When we were in Belgium giving lectures, he grabbed someone who was clearly Christian as he had a cross on his chest. Jan said to him. "Are you afraid that I'll convert you?" The person in question was very frightened. I remember when I called our center in the Netherlands and shouted, "Hurray! He is enlightened!" My personal relationship with Jan was ambiguous. Often, he treated me as a junior and named me "Poncho" while he called himself "Don Quixote". Still, I loved him when I saw what he had to offer. Bhagwan had once said, "When you find a diamond, share it and shout it from the rooftop." Jan really thought he had found a "diamond" because I saw the glint in his eyes and he had even lit me with his enthusiasm. Foudraine was strong but he wore a harness quite often and a sword in his hand. He fought against the established order within psychiatry. That was brave and afterwards, I could only confirm that he was right.

Despite the fact that our activities were good, there were times when I felt scared again. However, it was a fear other than what I was used to. It was the fear of letting go of all my emotions and sadness, and I had to learn to live as best as I could with these fears. It was a struggle, an agony, and I really felt like I was dying. Little by little, I was able to let go of

things. At that time, I drew strength from the many tapes of Bhagwan, Krishnamurti, and Foudraine. It was a hellish struggle. Amrito asked me later how I maintained myself all along.

Meanwhile, everything was business as usual in our warehouse. My ex-wife stayed home instead of reporting at Soestdijk. The publisher had sent us hundreds of books which we could sell during the lectures. Still, I began to feel uncomfortable about the situation. Again, I got the same feeling I had experienced with the hotline. All criticism was played back. Then came the disturbing reports. Also, Sheila, the head of the commune in Oregon, ensured that the entire area was guarded by members with machine guns. I felt that something was wrong. I also saw changes in the behavior of Jan Foudraine. He became increasingly authoritarian and his Saturday seminars which I always recorded on video became more confrontational, which was quite frightening. It brought many fears and feelings of the participants to the top, even for me. I remember writing a letter to Sheila for advice. They advised me to just keep going. Jan resisted the advice. He was once invited to a major direct TV broadcast by Sonja Barend to talk about schizophrenia. He started with a full house, pointed to a plant, and said "Are!" Nobody understood what he meant and Sonja then turned to the audience and asked if they understood what he meant. The whole audience shouted, "No!" That was the end of the interview and Amrito made bad publicity for us. Jan Foudraine had ridiculed an audience of millions instead of taking the opportunity to make our work known by a huge audience. He became arrogant and not just in my eyes. Often, I couldn't hold it but I couldn't find a safe place in our own warehouse to be on my own.

I therefore decided to go to the commune at Egmond aan Zee where dutch actor Albert Mol and the famous dutch singer Ramses Shaffy stayed. It was my intention to get there to rest and think. Immediately upon my arrival, I was offered therapy which I totally didn't need. I just wanted to sit by the sea and had no need for therapy. While the therapy was underway, I heard the yelling of dozens of people. I just sat staring at the setting sun on the beach. Suddenly, everything fell off me and I only saw the light of the sun, the face of Bhagwan, and felt one with him. An overwhelming love filled my heart and I realized it was finally just

the two of us and what was around didn't really matter. With that sense of unity, I returned to the commune where they had just finished the therapy. At that moment, one of them stepped up to me and said, "You look beautiful." Silently, I nodded my head. My heart was still so filled with light and love. The next day, I went back to my own little world in our warehouse in Baarn. I wanted a middleman. I had found a diamond and I wanted to share it with anyone who would listen. However, how did you do that without immediately being a missionary?

Meanwhile, a letter arrived from The Hague. It was from the personnel manager of Her Majesty Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands, in which he informed us that he wanted to see how everything was and that he would personally visit us. There would be a big party to celebrate the coronation of Queen Beatrix at the Royal Palace on Dam Square in Amsterdam which we were invited to. For us, this invitation was the opportunity to dress in red and present it to the entire royal family. Jan and I decided that if the opportunity arose, we would make a video recording of him talking about suicide. It was one of our first productions: a home-made recording which was not too professional.

From Soestdijk, we left together with the other members of staff in blue AA buses to the Royal Palace in Amsterdam. My wife wore a beautiful red dress and looked very feminine, while I wore my best red pants with a red jacket and a purple shirt underneath. Bhagwan was in our hearts and despite the many disapproving glances of the court, we felt strong. We were now already accustomed to criticism and fierce reactions about our clothing, most of which were from the Christian authorities. Many of them thought that Bhagwan was the anti-Christ. When we arrived in Amsterdam, we were immediately surrounded by people who thought that we were important guests. In my pocket was the videotape about suicide, ready to be handed to a member of the Royal Family. We walked up the big, wide stairs and came into the great hall where the entire Royal Family was. We walked towards them and I knew that they already saw us coming from a distance. We walked in our red clothing as if we were king and queen. In a flash, I saw the faces of the Royal Family. Queen Beatrix was completely surprised and smiled delicately, Princess Irene almost doubled up with laughter, and Juliana

covered her mouth after saying “What the hell is that?” When Prince Bernhard arrived, he shook our hands and then turned his head away. Then, we entered with many others and sat at a small table with a few gardeners. Prince Bernhard, who always came to us on such occasions, didn’t do so that evening. When our eyes met, I smiled at him and he smiled back. In the distance, I saw Queen Beatrix coming towards us. She smiled and stared constantly at the picture of Bhagwan that hung on my mala. I felt no rejection and everything went perfectly. As a reflex, my hand went inside the pocket of my jacket. I took the tape and handed it to her. Queen Beatrix took it, glanced at it, and thanked me. Then, she handed the tape to the lady. The mission was successful. Actually, I had done something that wasn’t allowed. Our mission was successful and I could hardly wait to tell Jan the good news. I felt like 007! A few days later, I saw a letter on Jan’s desk which was addressed to the head office of Bhagwan. A line that struck me was: “...I managed to penetrate the Royal Family.” It gave me a bitter taste in my mouth. I felt abused me, betrayed, and I immediately regretted what I had done. It was as if we were working on the orders of Bhagwan to convert the Netherlands.

However, I was not about to argue with him. I kept my mouth shut because I already knew how he would react to my criticism. My need to meet Bhagwan really grew and I started to make plans to travel to the Bhagwan commune in Oregon which was already extremely compromised.

46. OREGON, USA

I had read a book by Bhagwan which was about his past and previous life. He described therein how he was “killed” for a few weeks before he got ‘enlightened’ and how he came back as a Master on Earth. For most people, this story would be strange and absurd but for me, these images were real. At home, I began to relive things. I saw that it was me who had killed Bhagwan and that he came back to Earth out of love. I was completely the opposite of Bhagwan’s images. I knew from my days in depth therapy and also from the works of Bhagwan that moments of regression can only be experienced when you were open and ready.

Completely panicked, I ran to my ex-wife and screamed as if it had just happened, "I killed Bhagwan!"

It all felt so incredibly real to me. I had killed someone that I loved so much and I felt like a Judas. Every time I read that book, those images came back. In my experience, I always went back to a place somewhere in Tibet around 1400 AD. I was a monk, a sanniyasin. With whom I could share this knowledge? It was not something I could be proud of. Especially in the beginning, I had a lot of difficulty. It was a silent pain in my heart that I couldn't share with anyone, even with Jan Foudraine. With this experience in mind, I decided to visit relatives and meanwhile, Bhagwan changed his name to Osho when he went to America. With a heart full of love, I booked a flight to New York. From there, I traveled for three days on a Greyhound bus to the state of Oregon. It was three long days and nights but I wanted to see America and this was the best and cheapest way—\$50 for the whole way. I traveled through Chicago, Salt Lake City, and many other places which I recognized from the cowboy and Indian movies, including the incredible sunsets. The food was not varied. In the morning, afternoon, and evening, I had McDonald's. One time, I was lucky when someone got off the bus and bought a bucket of chicken from Kentucky Fried Chicken. Unsuspecting and not knowing what was ahead of me, I traveled—dressed in red pants and a wine red jacket, a wine red tie, purple shirt, and my necklace with the picture of Osho—through America. Sometimes, people came up to me and asked me if the person in the picture was my grandfather or Khomeini. In the Osho Times, I only read positive news about the new commune in Oregon. Osho was indeed in silence but every day, he drove around the grounds in one of his 99 Rolls Royces. To this man, I was on my way. This man, who was hit with a truth which to me was true, was so real to me. Along the way, I often had to make many transfers. One time I was sitting on a chair, on it was written with a large felt-tip pen, Judas. It scared me to death. The whole reliving started back in the middle of the wilderness of America. Because all the seats in the bus were taken, I had to sit on that chair until the next stop. I felt so vulnerable. It reminded me of my stay in the psychiatric hospital in Melbourne where I had cried out during a therapy group, "I killed somebody." I felt a deep sense of

guilt and wanted to crawl away. I couldn't understand how something that had occurred hundreds of years ago could still be present in me.

Meanwhile, we approached the large commune Rashneesh Purum, which was located between the hills where a new heaven on earth would be created. This was where the animals went and you could milk the cows in a state of enlightenment. It was where the flowers welcomed you with energy. That was the image I had of the new settlement. The closer we approached the place, the more I became aware that there was really something else going on. I felt more and more hatred around me. At one point, I was on a bus full of hate. The other passengers turned against me. What exactly was going on, I only learned of much later. That happened in the Portland Hotel where I had to report first. From there, I would ride a special Bhagwan shuttle bus for the last stretch to the commune along with the others. The Portland Hotel was owned by a member of the commune. On arrival, we were told that our lives were in danger and that we weren't allowed to go out unaccompanied out because there were some sannyasins that were beaten up and perhaps killed. Also, a bomb attack on the Portland Hotel took place. Hence, we would not travel the next day. We all went on the special Bhagwan bus and went to the commune. I saw the beauty of the land, the mountains, the flowing river, and the beautiful flowers. For a moment, I forgot what I had relived and started singing a song I had learned from one Osho's cassettes, "*We are flowers in your garden, opening, opening, we are lovers and your friends traveling home.*" Was this still that heaven on earth? In the last Greyhound bus I was on, I sat next to a woman who only lived a kilometer away from the commune. She had heard of it but had no interest in it. I remember thinking, "How was that possible? I came from the Netherlands and paid thousands of dollars to come here. Here I am sitting next to a woman who practically lives next to the commune and experiences nothing." Then, I remembered what Osho had once said, "I will call you" and maybe that was true. Indeed, I heard Osho call on me. The next morning I would see him, at least if there was no attack committed. Meanwhile, I continued to sing, "*...we are flowers in your garden, opening, opening...*"

I sat on the bus next to Santos, who was at that time a big name in the field of hypnotherapy in the Netherlands and abroad. I got into a conversation with him. I told him that I worked with Jan Foudraine and that we gave seminars and lectures in our center and in the country. I still remember what he replied, "Oh, God. He's still doing that?"

Meanwhile, the bus arrived at the commune. It all looked big and impressive. At the reception, I stood in the queue. We were assigned a room or cottage. I observed the female sannyasi who took her time in doing the registration. It seemed like they did everything extra slowly, as if everything was on video and played in slow motion. I started to get annoyed, especially since I felt tired after a long journey of three days and nights on a Greyhound. When it was my turn, she asked me how I got there and I responded by saying I took a bus from New York. She just replied with, "Typical English style." I got half a house allotted to me in the Walt Whitman neighborhood, near the residence of Osho. It gave me a strange feeling when I realized that I was going to meet Osho in person the next day. It often happened that he just didn't show up. These were the stories of some people who came from near and far who spent all that money for nothing. You had to take life as it came and accept it. Speaking of money, I remember the dollar at that time was very expensive, so I couldn't stay too long. My little cottage had the shape of a pyramid and was divided into two. Each half had its own bed and a bathroom. It looked beautiful. It got even better when I discovered that my neighbor was a beautiful, single young woman who had a little boy of a year or so. They came from California and she was much like some American country and Western singer. We spent that first night together in our pyramid in the valley surrounded by the mountains of Oregon and were perhaps being watched by Osho. While her son slept, we were awake and I felt her long hair slip across my chest and back. The next day, I woke up early to see Osho during his daily tour of the grounds in one of his Rolls Royces. Every day, thousands of people stood along the way, waiting for him. This time, there were five thousand extra people. I heard later on that they had picked up five thousand wanderers from all major cities and transported them on buses to "share the abundance". Finally he came, this time in a black Rolls Royce. He used this more

often. For me, it was the Black Death and I was shocked. When the car was just a few feet away from me, something happened to me which I had no control over. I was filled with an incredible energy. I ran after the car along with the others until I couldn't anymore. Yes, I was obsessed but in a positive way. I had seen with my own eyes the man who meant everything to me. That man was Osho, the man who brought me towards the light.

When I walked past a tent a while later, I found an old man of about eighty years. He had bright blue eyes with tears in them. He was one of those homeless people they had picked up somewhere in a big city. I heard that man say, "Who is this guy anyway? I see his picture everywhere." I replied, "That's Osho." I will never forget the moment when the old man said, "Have I finally come home?" Also, I will never forget what happened with me that day. That same evening, I jumped out of bed in panic and began to relive that I had once killed Osho a long time ago. The moon was full and I walked outside. I didn't know why but suddenly, people gathered around me. When I told them what was going on with me, one of them said that he was the therapist and right hand of Osho, Teertra. He would meet Osho the next day and that he would submit my case. That assured me. That night, I fell asleep again in the arms of my beloved with her long hair. The next day, her son would be initiated and given a new name. I wouldn't be there. I just wondered why you had to devote such a small child to the sannyasin. However, when we heard that he partly had the same name as I had, Alok, we were pleased. This was no coincidence. We both saw it as a sign that we were meant for each other.

The days flew by and the money flew out of my pocket, too. I began to feel at home at the commune. The less pleasant experience I had with Osho was when I saw him in person but we were guarded by machine guns. At another time, I heard a male sannyasin giving criticisms. Everything was so mysterious. Even when I was in a bookstore and inquired about a special booklet which was about the youth and the past of Osho, I found that that book was taken off the market and was suddenly no longer available. No, it didn't feel right. Also, I was told that I would not get to speak to Teertra. I could work on my further

development in the Netherlands, I was told. It all sounded so threatening and dismissive. Actually, I wanted to return to the Netherlands. I even began to doubt Osho. The only thing that was going well was my relationship. However, I couldn't stay longer as my money was running out. After a brief goodbye, with a smile and a tear I left Oregon and my beloved. I got on the bus to Portland. When I arrived in Portland, I was surrounded by hostile people who harassed me because of my red clothing. I managed to escape to the train station across the street and asked the police for protection until the bus came along. On the bus, I saw the desert, sunset, had Big Macs and Kentucky fried chickens, saw the homeless, and remembered my long-haired lover. In my mind, I felt her hand over my body, and as the sun went down and the bus passed Salt Lake City, I got the feeling that life was good. With those thoughts, I fell asleep. The rest of the trip was really tiring. After spending three days and nights on a Greyhound bus, I would then have to spend another day in New York before my flight. On the plane, I couldn't sleep and I had hallucinations. Everything I had seen and experienced in Oregon repeated like a movie in my head. Once back home in my warehouse, I only wanted my bed.

47. WAREHOUSE—BAARN (2)

How different life was back in the Netherlands. Jan Foudraine moved out after I broke away from him. It just wasn't working for us. He always threw the ball back at any criticism of his person. This criticism was always under the guise of a contribution to your own growth, but I totally disagreed. Later on, the relationship with Foudraine would be well again. However, at that time I was doing other things. My head and heart were with my "Dolly Parton" in America, who wanted me to visit her in California. I didn't mind living in Mount Helena with her but I had no money at that time. Nothing in Baarn kept me from returning to Dolly. My wife and I were separated. We were still good friends but went on our own ways.

48. SAN FRANCISCO, USA

After a few months, I learned that my beloved had left Oregon and went back home. For me, this was the sign to pack my bags and head for San Francisco. My ex-wife took me to the airport. In London, I had to change planes. There, I met a beautiful young woman who was on her way to see Osho at his commune in Oregon. She was a doctor and came from France. Together, we flew to America. In America, we had to land in Florida due to bad weather. Because we couldn't get a connecting flight, we were offered a night in a motel. I enjoyed a delicious meal with a double steak in mushroom sauce. That night, I shared a bed with her but—as I promised—nothing happened. I only tried once, but after a fierce tap on my fingers, I gave up and was grateful to see my French physician asleep. In Florida, we parted ways. I flew to San Francisco, where I was picked up by my “Dolly Parton” and drove to her house. It was December and almost Christmas. The first week, I felt welcome in her family. They had prepared a wonderful Christmas meal with freshly caught fish in abundance. This was America as I knew from the stories and movies—a big house with a big car in front, and large plates of food on the table. My girlfriend was very confused and disappointed after returning from Oregon. She was told that she had to give her home to the organization. She couldn't because the house was partly in the name of her father. I could hardly believe that all of this happened in the name of Osho. I also heard other stories that were not virtues such as the arrival of the wanderers who were meant to make majority of the votes for the City Council. Later, it turned out that all the publications stated these facts. The tension was too high and we couldn't see eye to eye anymore. I didn't feel at home in her house and barely after a week, we already decided to part ways. For the last few days, I booked a room at a hotel in the cowboy part of the city. I walked through the posh and poor neighborhoods and saw wealth and poverty co-exist. There were the rich people in big cars and the people who slept on cardboard boxes on the streets. I wandered through Chinatown with its exotic sights and delicious smells. In one of the many pawn shops, I bought a watch set with diamonds as a souvenir. I was alone and in a few days, I would fly back to the Netherlands. I called our warehouse to say that I was coming

back. When the plane took off, I looked out the window and thought, "Goodbye, America. Goodbye, dear people on your cardboard boxes. Goodbye, Dolly. Thanks for everything. It was worth a try but alas...I hope you stay well."

Chapter 5

Traveling through Europe 1 (1981-1997)

49. WAREHOUSE—BAARN (3)

Less than two weeks after my ex-wife had waved me off “forever”, she met me with a smile on her face. I was home and together, we drove to our warehouse where our three cats were—Pukkie, Poekie, and Tinkie. When I entered the house, I stood face to face with the same life-size picture of Osho who was laughing. I understood. I also had to laugh... at myself.

With Jan Foudraïne out the door, I suddenly had a lot more room to do what I wanted. Because my wife and I wanted to be more like how we used to, I moved from the first floor to Jan’s room. It was a very cozy room that overlooked the backyard. If I was quiet, I could hear the birds singing. To the left of the garden was a little hazelnut tree that I had managed to save from the dunghill at my father-in-law’s house in Bloemendaal. Sure enough, it already gave its first hazelnuts. I loved the trees and plants. They are our mirror from root to crown and we breathe their breath. Back in the Netherlands, I felt a great urge to start writing and singing. After all, Osho didn’t give me the name “singer of light” for nothing. For the first time in a long time, I had a microphone in my hands again. I felt like that little boy with his childhood dreams about Dorus, KRO, and AVRO before we left for Australia. Again, I had to overcome my fears to stand and sing. Pain, worry, sadness, rejection and misunderstanding—these all came back in full force. I turned into that quiet and shy child who sat in a corner.

I finally found the courage to sing, full again. In each note, I sang a tear that was audible and recognizable not only for me, but also for others. I myself was moved when I sang the song *He Was Just Living Like A Star* and often cried afterwards. Luckily, I got the support of the people around me though there were not many. I had to get used to the huge proverbial sobriety of the Dutch people. However, I persevered with my microphone in my hand and squeezed all the air out of my

lungs. At first, I sang without an audience. One day, while I was working on my Inner Light Show, I accidentally ran into someone who heard me singing and said, "It will take years, Swami, before you're ready to do this." I remember thinking, "This man doesn't understand and is full of shit up to his neck." In retrospect, I had that right. I also got a visit from someone once who, according to him, had good contacts with record companies. Together, we listened to my homemade songs and we picked one to submit. It was "Love is the Seed". We were both convinced that they would release such a beautiful song. However, after a few weeks I received a letter from the recording company which stated, "This guy can't sing and that song is shit!" I wrote them back to tell them that they had to go into therapy and I hung the letter on the wall for days to prove the contrary. *Love is the Seed* was a song about the divine. Much of my work was so established. It motivates me. It is a heavenly gift. Like the trees in the forest, it is not perfect but real. While we were busy in our warehouse with creation and meditation, my ex-wife and I wanted to leave this cold, cramped, and damp country and travel indefinitely. Our first idea was to drive our old Volvo to Greece. It would be a journey of seven thousand kilometers. Greece called me and I answered it. It was the beginning of a new love, a relationship that was going to get better—Greece and me. In my mind, I saw before me the whole trip. First, I had to drive straight through Germany, Austria, then drive another 1,200 kilometers through Yugoslavia on its infamous routes, and then take the last exit towards Athens. In Australia, I had often driven long distances and it was like I experienced all those memories again. I loved the travel itself. It gave me a sense of freedom, like I was a bird in the sky.

50. WITH INEKE TO SANTORINI, GREECE

Greece was waiting for us. It was a country I had never been to, but I had heard many beautiful things about it. Maybe we went there to live. This trip would be a discovery. Our Volvo, which was over 10 years old, had to be checked for the trip. Although he still looked gorgeous, he had more than 250,000 km on the clock already. I had managed to sell my houseboat for a nice amount. Our antique cabinets and silver spoons we had sold to an antique dealer. The cats we had placed with friends. The

doors of our warehouse were locked and finally, dressed in red and with our malas, we started the long journey.

It was spring. The birds were singing and the leaves timidly reappeared. The trip through Germany and Austria didn't have much problems. In Yugoslavia, we saw the gray, drab lives in Belgrade. We stayed overnight against the outrageously high price at that time of \$50 a night. Because all the stories about communism and the KGB, we constantly had the feeling that we would be frightened so we kept quiet and didn't talk much with each other that night. We had now discovered that the hamburgers in Yugoslavia were the best we had ever eaten. They were three times as large and were hand-grilled, while freshly-baked breads were baked by women with white caps on their heads. After Belgrade, the road went through the winding routes with its dark tunnels to the south. That road was name "Death Road" because the road was full of holes and sometimes, you drove right past deep ravines without any security. It was also tiring to drive so my wife and I alternated. My Catholic upbringing spontaneously came up again. I shouted, "Lord, have mercy on us" and I called all the saints of the Catholic Church.

Finally, we reached the border of Greece and after our car and camera were credited in our passports, we were able to clear customs without much trouble. Once we were over the border, I was overwhelmed by a blissful feeling. I opened the windows and sniffed the Greek air. I felt free. I had arrived in the land of Zorba where Osho so often had been. Everywhere, we saw flowers. Here, the sun was shining and the flowers laughed at us. At a waterfront restaurant, we ordered fish and a bottle of wine. The food tasted very exquisite, however the bill fell heavily on the stomach. It turned out to be more expensive here than in the Netherlands. Anyway, with a full stomach, we continued our journey towards Thessaloniki. The song we sang was a song of Osho, "*The universe is singing a song, dancing along the universe, the universe is singing on a day like this!*"

After driving a few hundred miles along the coast towards Athens, near Olympus we found a nice spot by the sea. "Here, we will never go away," we said to each other until we met some tourists who told us that this was not the prettiest place and that the best part was yet to

come. One of them advised us to visit the volcanic island of Santorini. It seemed to interest us a bit. We had nothing planned after all. After a few days' rest, we left for Santorini. With the Acropolis in the background, we drove towards the port of Piraeus. We bought a ticket and went all aboard. Three and a half thousand miles from home, we were being carried over the blue sea where dolphins occasionally leapt out of the water to greet us. That night, we lay on our backs on the deck and we stared at the clear sky with millions of stars. Oh, life was good. This was probably what the apostles of Jesus experienced. It was probably where John the Baptist had also gone ashore. In any case, the town looked impressive with a large illuminated cross atop the mountain. Soon, we reached Santorini. When we arrived, we didn't know that Santorini had an old volcanic crater and that you had to climb a narrow path carved out of the rock to get hundreds of feet up the island. Once above, a miracle of unparalleled beauty revealed itself. My heart popped open with love. What an island, what richness, what purity. This was Hellas, the land of light and sea. This was my haven. This was my home. Tears flowed down my cheeks. These were thick tears of recognition and great emotion.

I imagined myself walking by the blue sea in a long white robe, surrounded by beautiful women. I felt that this island moved me and that it was in constant motion. I felt the tension and strength in my body. What a blow that would have given the island some 1500 years ago when the huge explosion took place and the whole heart of the island was blown away. Was this Atlantis, the lost island? My heart said yes. Meanwhile, we had set up our tent on the beach between some trees. Soon, we realized that this was not such a good idea. It was too early in the year and our tent was certainly no match for the strong winds which the island was famous for. We therefore decided to rent a room somewhere very simple and inexpensive. We came across an old man with two donkeys who said he had a room available. It was the most humble room that you could imagine, so incredibly primitive. Actually, it was not a room but a concrete donkey stable. Everyday, the old man came to us with some small tomatoes and cucumbers. He would then ask us, "Today? Tomorrow? Tonight? You sleep here?" and we said again,

“Yes.” It was 1983 and the island was not yet discovered by tourism. Everything was free and open, the toilet was everywhere, and you could sleep everywhere, perhaps in an old barn or under the stars. We were the first foreigners on the island that season and we quickly met some Greeks who didn’t see us as spoiled tourists. One of them was called Nicos who ran a restaurant with his family in one of the most beautiful spots on the beach of Perissa. Nicos and I became instant friends. Weeks went by. On one of my walks on the island, I found a beautiful cave of pumice in the mountains behind Perissa. From that cave, you could practically see the whole island. That made me feel like royalty. It was there that I got the idea to start writing. A voice in my heart sang constantly, “*Oh island in the sun, make me one, oh island in the sun, make me one.*” It sounded like an echo from a distant past. It reminded me of my stay on Rottnest Island on the coast of Western Australia where I began writing. I felt that I had to write and that I needed to be alone for that.

However, it was different. I didn’t know what exactly the reason was but at one point, I wanted to take my wife back to the Netherlands. We didn’t have a fight or anything but it just didn’t feel good to be in Greece together. We finally decided and soon, we were in our old Volvo driving back to the Netherlands. In my heart, I promised to return to Santorini as soon as possible. We said goodbye to the island and to all of our good friends. We stopped at all the beautiful spots along the coast which we had grown to love. Then we drove through Yugoslavia and had those tasty burgers again. We continued through Austria and Germany, and then we were almost home with only 1,000 miles to go. The weather was good and I got accustomed to those winding roads through the mountains with their deep ravines and dark tunnels.

Back in our warehouse in Baarn, everything was exactly as we had left it. Our cats welcomed us. All my video and audio equipment were waiting for me. Miraculously, I appeared to have more money than I expected. I also got some money from the sale of my boat. With all that money, there was only one thing I had in mind—to return to my island of Santorini as soon as possible. I wanted to return to writing and quite possibly earn a living from a few songs that I had made. This time, I could take my big Dynacord because there was enough space

on the Volvo now. I was in a heightened state of readiness and I was unstoppable. After my departure from Australia, I never found anything nicer and which suited me more. It was Greece, the land of Zorba with its blue sea, black lava, and the wind that went from island to island.

51. ALONE IN SANTORINI, GREECE

Because I knew the way, I drove blindly to Greece. Everything went well up to the border with Greece. Because I had my Dynacord with me and a small outboard motor, everything had to be written in my passport again. If I couldn't show these things when I exit Greece, I would be arrested for smuggling. I was told that anything with a plug had to be declared. It was because there, you could make a good profit from selling items in Greece. The prices were on average three times higher than the Netherlands. I have known young people who had a VCR in their backpack but didn't declare it at customs. They sold the VCR in Greece and could live for a month on the proceeds.

Back in Santorini, I was received with open arms. They couldn't believe that I had driven back from the Netherlands in such a short time. Also, they were touched by my love for the island. They kept me in their hearts. This time, they gave the best wine from the cellars of Pappa Baba Nies, the father of Nicos. This particular wine was made from grapes grown on the black lava and was called "petrol" because you felt better afterwards. Only special guests were served that wine and I was proud that they gave me that honor. I was back on my island, alone with the mountains, the sea, and the lava beach which I loved so much. I lay nude in the surf while the waves washed over me every time. It felt like a cleansing, as if I was baptized again. Everyday, I parked my car at the foot of the mountain and I climbed over the boulders to my cave. I sat down on a large rock with my tape recorder at the ready, "*Oh Santorini, oh island in the sun, one day we will be one, I hear your winds blowing, your rolling oceans and knowing, I hear your upwind saying, that we must keep on playing, until he finds his child again.*"

My inner child, I soon recovered. While walking on the black lava sand, sometimes I stopped to pick up small stones. Then, I picked up a stick and thus drew a tic-tac-toe on the sand which was washed over by

a wave. Here was my home. The salty air cleansed my body. Along the beach, I could stay for hours in the moment. There was no goal and no destination. Nicos showed me the places where the other tourists never came. Therefore, I began to know and love the island more.

I often spent my evenings at the Dorians Pub which Nicos had just opened. After working all day in the restaurant of his family, he and his wife ran their own Dorian Pub from 9 o'clock in the evening till the last guests were gone. In that pub, I had my first gig as a singer. We had my Dynacord removed from storage and placed it in the pub. Hidden behind a pillar, I started singing. First, I was terrified and trembling. Since Australia, I had not sung in public. All the memories of that time came up again. The tourist season had not started yet and most of the attendees were Greeks who responded enthusiastically. "Come forward, Luka," they said. "Stand in our midst. We want to see you." They enjoyed my rendition of *Strangers in the Night* and *My Way* by Frank Sinatra. I began to get my confidence back. My heart opened and I sang as I had never sung. In my back pocket was my mala with the photo of Osho on it. With one hand, I held my mala and the other, the microphone. It gave me strength and awareness. Again, I heard in my heart the words that Osho said to me, "You are the singer of light." When I was done, I got an overwhelming applause from the audience. Everyone offered me drinks but I just had a small glass of wine at most because I had now become a Coke man. Through this experience, I knew that as long as I could sing, I didn't need to worry.

Good fortune smiled at me. I began to make more friends on the island. Sometimes, I helped fishermen bring in their nets. In exchange for my help, I got some fish that Nicos put on the grill that evening. I also brought my professional video camera to Santorini. For the Greeks, it was a camera which they could only dream of. I started filming them and saw how they enjoyed the recordings. Soon, I was asked to take videos anywhere, at parties and weddings. One time, I was invited into a large hall. There were hundreds of Greeks shouting at each other like clucking chickens. On stage was a famous bouzouki player from Athens. He played all the way from his heart. I was blown away by the wonderful sound. At one point, he played his instrument on the stage and then he

walked right up to me. He looked at me with his big, dark eyes and said, "I am playing for you because you're the only one who is listening!" That made a great impression on me and later when I started singing myself in big hotels, I often walked into the audience and said to a beautiful woman in the crowd, "I only sing for you...because you listen!"

One night, I stood with my coke at the bar of the Spiros Disco which was directly opposite the Dorians Pub. It was an open-air disco where up to 400 people could be accommodated. I stood alone at the bar drowned in thought. I saw that the island of Santorini was trying to blow itself up. I stood there and watched the huge volcanic eruption. Once the images were over, I heard a voice in my heart which said, "You'll die when you're 54 years old" and that was repeated several times. I didn't know where that voice came from. Since then, that phrase never left me. Who said that? Where did that voice come from? At that time, I was 39 years old. If it was true, I still had 15 years to go. That night, I left the disco as another man but what exactly was different, I couldn't say. The experience was so real that it scared me. I walked on the beach and watched the sunset. I stretched myself out on the black lava sand. Again, I saw myself walking by the water in a long, white robe. Maybe I had a previous life here? Did I come back here to make or find something? Nobody could give me an answer. I heard the voice again and at that time, I had a very oppressive feeling about me as if I was going to die tomorrow. I panicked because I was still so happy and wasn't finished here on Earth. My body couldn't let go of that anxiety. I was alone on the deserted beach and looked up at the beautiful stars that began to shine ever brighter. I was alone with the silence and the sky above me. I went all the way and found rest. That night, I sang at the pub while the stars twinkled in the sky and shone their lumen on the waves of the sea.

In addition to a sense of fear, I felt I had to accomplish so much and that pressure wouldn't let me go. Meanwhile, I enjoyed the incredible beauty of the island and the people that I so loved. They were sometimes so naive, so open and giving. I made friends with a family from the village who owned a piece of land on the beach. They had loaned money from the bank in order to build a large hotel there. When the hotel was finished, they wanted to paint the name of the hotel in big white Greek

capitals. However, they wanted the characters so large that the whole word did not fit on the facade. The last two letters they put underneath. Oh, I just had to laugh! Well, that was the Greece I loved. It was something like we had wonderful showers but unfortunately no water.

Gradually, my Greek friends thought that it was time that I moved to a beautiful home. I could afford it and I could choose between an old mill and a house in the village of Emborio where Nicos' family lived. I chose the house because the mill was in poor condition. To my great surprise, several families immediately started to renovate it. It was too good to be true. The house had a large terrace overlooking the sea. I got quickly established in their village. Everyday, there was a knock on my door and there stood someone with lemons, hazelnuts, figs, small tomatoes, eggs, and so on. I was embarrassed. Everything just came to me. I had never experienced it before. I looked at the sky and then thanked whom all this beauty had come from. A voice inside me said, "This is for you." My tears beaded richly between the newly received hazelnuts that I held in my hand. Who would have thought that life could be so beautiful and good, and that I was worth it all? What a different life it was compared to Australia where I had been in prisons and lunatic asylums. Then came the feeling of "Oh, but I'm going to die and I have to leave all of this." When I was 19 years old and tried to commit suicide, I had to really see how beautiful life was or could be. My eyes were still so full of tears, anger and desolation. It was like a black curtain hung before my eyes. Only when the curtain was raised could I behold the beauty of life.

On this wonderful Greek island, there was beauty in abundance. My heart was full of happiness and emotions. Every night, my voice started to sound nicer. I dared to stand amidst the people with a big heart and I sang *I am Sailing* by Rod Stewart or *You'll Never Walk Alone*. After my performances and as the pub closed for the evening, Nicos and Lulu always prepared a meal especially for us. We sat there for an hour or one or two and enjoyed our food. In the distance we could hear the sloshing of waves and the roar of a fishing boat. From my bed in the village of Emborio, I looked through the window and I saw the millions of twinkling stars that kept me company. I felt at home and relaxed.

Suddenly, I remembered the many conversations I had at the bar that night. It struck me how people were interested in what I had to say.

One time, we talked about the unity of life. Nicos only said, "Luka, how can that be?" I picked up a glass of water and said, "Look, these drops are all together." I stuck my finger in the glass and showed how a few drops slipped off my finger. Then, I heard someone ask, "Where do we go when we die?" I turned the glass and all the water fell to the ground. "There," I said. "That's where we're going." I saw Nico's mouth drop open in surprise. Years later, he talked about that glass of water. We then laughed. With a smile on my face, I fell asleep after a glass of water to quench my thirst. Despite the fresh breeze coming through the open window, it was often warm at night. In the morning, I sat on my patio with coffee and fresh bread which I had bought from the bakery at the corner. I looked at the blue waves in the distance. Then, I grabbed a pen and paper and began to write without an idea in advance. I inhaled the scent of the island and got a melancholic feeling. I was here and life gave me everything. My neighbor came by with some eggs. Together, we enjoyed a great breakfast without saying anything because we did not understand each other. However, our eyes spoke volumes. We understood each other simply—give and take. Yes, this was life and it was how it should be.

A summer went by. The season came to an end and Nicos and most islanders were now in the most beautiful months, the months without tourists. It was the time in which the grapes were obtained. I got the offer to spend the winter on the island but it meant no transportation to the mainland, large falling rocks on the road, and a dangerous wind that drew people into the sea. A look at my wallet told me that I shouldn't do it and that it was time to go back to Holland. In my Volvo, I said goodbye to the people I loved. It was tough but I felt that this time, it was the right decision. The island had made me into another man and brought me closer to myself. Here, I felt great anxiety. Later, I would learn that "growing" meant consciously letting go of the old and accepting the new unconditionally.

52. WAREHOUSE—BAARN (4)

The day I drove away, I knew that I would return to this island. Even though I was not there, my heart remained connected with the light of Santorini. It was clear to me that Santorini was the island of love and peace. My previous life had ended and in this life, I could find my way back and follow the road to nowhere. The best wine of the island, tons of hazelnuts, and a large, white embroidered robe Nicos' mother had made for my ex-wife were in the trunk of my car. Also, there was a big 10-liter jug of wine. I had included some large boulders of lava and pumice to decorate the garden in our center. Driving through Yugoslavia, I was haunted by the phrase that I would die when I was 54 years old. It was like a rusty nail that was etched in my memory. Everything I did with a sense of haste and urgency. On the other hand, it gave me the certainty that I wasn't dead yet, at least.

Back in the Netherlands, I was welcomed as a prodigal son who had done something illegal. I came straight into the reality of everyday contact. The lightning which had struck our center destroyed many things. Jan Foudraine was back although he lived somewhere else. I quickly took up the thread and I began recording and copying cassettes and videos. Carefully, I worked on the songs and poems which I had written in Santorini. Jan sat down and listened but he didn't have a good word to say. He found it all emotional and egoistic. His comments really confused me. Meanwhile in America, the Osho settlement in Oregon fumbled. Many sannyasins resigned because they didn't know why it was done very secretly.

It was the time of the emergence of AIDS. Because we were still in the business of love, we were asked to take an AIDS test. We got the results of the test after a few weeks. I remember when I was called in. I saw myself in the queue. At one point, I was removed from the queue along with a few others. The fear hit my heart. All the others got the message that they didn't have AIDS. We were told that we still had to come in for a check-up every time. Fortunately, I didn't have AIDS.

In Amsterdam, we were told that we would hear important news about Osho soon. About what exactly they couldn't say, but I felt the tension. We went back to our office in Baarn wearing our red dress and

malas. More and more contradictory messages came. It was better to stop wearing red clothes. We also heard a rumor that some sannyasins were beaten up. In the beginning, everyone had been very positive and friendly towards us but the reactions were reversed 180 degrees. We were advised to keep calm. Even my own family responded aggressively. The Bhagwan was a sect for them and that Osho was a scammer. One day, we were asked to come together to hear the latest news. When we were gathered, a video started playing. What we saw was an angry Osho. I couldn't believe my eyes and ears. I wanted nothing to do with it and I wanted to break my mala necklace and throw it on the ground. Yet, something kept me from doing so. It was not entirely clear to me. It made me remember all those times I had to hear that Jesus had twelve gay men behind him. Now, Osho was a perverse and evil sex maniac. All my old ideas were beaten to pieces at once. Back in our center, conflicting reports reached us. What was true and what was not? We also heard that Osho was taken into custody because he had tried to flee the country with all his money and jewelry. Our dreams of living in paradise were shattered. In a blow, our life was totally changed.

53. BETTY

One day, our doorbell rang. When I opened the door, I saw a young lady of about 35 years with short blond hair, a clear face, and bright blue eyes. For a moment I thought she was Mother Mary. However, it was not Mother Mary and her name wasn't Mary, but Betty. She told me she had just gone through a divorce. She had three children and lived in an apartment. She had often seen our group as we walked to the village of Baarn. Now, she wanted to join us. She had something special in her. She was very spiritual and beautiful. Also, she made some comments that blew me away. A relationship quickly grew between us. I was now divorced and was free to do whatever I wanted. It didn't take long before we witnessed one violent night after another in her apartment. Both she and I didn't know what hit us. The enormous energy that came loose gave me, for the first time in my life, a sense of unity. However, I noticed that Betty was not properly grounded. She was so high in her mind that she flew away occasionally. I told her of my fear that I would die at 54

years of age. She tried to help me solve my problem. During one of our love nights, I fell into a state of regression. I was back on the island of Santorini and saw us both in long white robes by the blue sea. I saw that she dipped her feet in the water and at that moment, everything disappeared. It was these kinds of unique experiences that made our relationship close and intense. My ex-wife was also in a new relationship and left the house. I remained alone in the center.

One day, Betty was standing at the door. This time, she was not alone. She stood there with her three children and a pile of blankets. She asked if she could stay with me. I was beaten with wonder and muttered "yes", but the kids protested so much that it didn't last a minute. The children were placed with their father who lived around the corner and that was better. Betty gave up her flat and came to live with me. The maintenance of the warehouse was starting to be a burden. Eventually, I gave up the warehouse. Anyway, my ex-wife now lived in a lodging in Baarn with her new boyfriend who was a builder. After that, the mountain of workshops and lectures quickly crumbled down. In the end, no one came up anymore and Jan Foudraïne was nowhere to be seen. Now that I had my hands free, I began to make plans to work with Betty, who had meanwhile become a sannyasin and was now called Archan Sukita. Bhagwan was now somewhere in a prison but no one knew exactly where. Also, no one knew what was really going on in Oregon. After some time, we got messages that Osho would be released on the condition that he would admit that he had violated immigration laws. He had to pay a hefty fine and was banned in entering America for five years. Moments later, we heard that Osho was perched on Crete and was staying there in the meantime. This immediately attracted followers to go to Crete and find him. We decided to go there. I bought a van for the trip. Archan and I headed to Crete to see the Master. It was a journey of 3,000 kilometers.

54. WITH BETTY TO CRETE, GREECE

For the umpteenth time, I drove through the dark tunnels of Yugoslavia. Our blue LT28 Volkswagen with a new Audi engine did well but drank gasoline. At night, we slept in our small bus somewhere in a parking lot with the doors locked. We were as free as the birds. Life

laughed with us. We were still 1,000 kilometers away from the Greek border. Just before the border, I felt a panic. I had forgotten to pay for the pastries and coffee at the gas station where we had tanked last. If we went back, would the police apprehend us? I wanted to drive back but we were already 50 miles away. Because we were poor in cash, we decided to take a chance and just drove on. We became paranoid and there seemed to be a police car at every corner.

Eventually, we reached the border of Greece where the customs officials made it felt that we were the biggest criminals in the world. Our VW bus and equipment were written in our passports. Just when we were given the signal to drive through, one man looked at each side of the bus. Because I knew we had nothing to hide, we stood quietly waiting. Then, we were dragged to an office. I saw a pile of Osho books and tapes and our red clothes on a desk. There were three angry men who shouted at us in Greek which we didn't understand. Then, we heard someone say something like "Hey, you sell?" to which I immediately said "no". I recognized that Greek anger and felt panic rising in me. I remember saying to Betty that she shouldn't forget to contact the Dutch Embassy. For a moment, I really thought we'd be torn apart because I had read about a man who was imprisoned for six months because he had smuggled a stack of bibles across the border. You could simply be arrested as a spy if you happened to be taking pictures somewhere. If you were a woman that was topless on the beach, you could also end up in jail. Meanwhile, the whole van was ransacked. Everything was thrown out. Everything we had put together with so much love now looked like a big garbage dump. Then, we had to wait. Just a few yards away was our freedom, the Greece that I so loved. I saw the beautiful flowers and bushes along the road which now were in bloom. We were so anxious. The minutes went on for hours. Suddenly, some important official said we could go and cried, "Go!" Another thundered our books, tapes, and clothes back in the van. I didn't know how fast Betty and I jumped on the van. Chased by angry glances, we drove up to the last gate. A few of those customs officials made a kind of dance for us with their hands facing up and shouted, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah!" Ultimately, the barrier went up. Wordlessly, I gave full throttle and I drove to Greece,

away from the border, away from that misunderstanding. After about 50 kilometers, I stopped without saying anything, glanced at the back of the van, and saw the havoc. The day was still early and we needed coffee.

With love, we brought the van back to its original state. We hid the books of Osho and our malas. We were scared to death and felt somewhat defeated. We continued towards Piraeus where we would take the boat to Crete.

When we arrived in Piraeus, I saw at a newspaper stand. On the front page of all the newspapers was a large picture of Osho, surrounded by the police. Although I hadn't read the text, I immediately knew what this picture meant. That was why we thought it was wiser and safer not to go to Crete. We walked aimlessly through the streets of Piraeus until the boat left. Those pictures of Osho resurfaced everywhere. I remember that we were both very tense and constantly argued. The world suddenly seemed against us. Upon boarding, it was no better. The Greeks shouted how to drive your car on board. They would shout "Ella, ella!" meaning "Come, come!" If you didn't do well in their eyes, they would cry out "Malakas!" meaning "fool" or "asshole". Driving your car onboard wasn't easy. Usually, the Germans were insulted by those Greek dockers because of their wide Mercedes or BMW. I remember thinking that the Greeks needed no therapy to live in the moment. Throughout the trip, I wondered what had happened to Osho. I wanted to know and I waited until I saw someone reading the newspaper. The man looked like a modern Greek. I sat down next to him and pointed to the picture of Osho. I hoped he could speak English and asked him what the man's picture was about. He replied, "He is not well. He's gone. Police. Greece, he is not good. Drugs. Sex." I looked at the picture and saw that the photo was taken at the airport of Heraklion. I also read that Osho was expelled from the country and that they threatened to blow up his house with dynamite if he didn't surrender voluntarily. There was just so much anger and aggression at the border. On one hand, we were glad we weren't picked up but on the other hand, we were disappointed that we couldn't just sit under a tree and listen to Osho's lectures. In a few hours, at seven in the morning, we would arrive in the harbor of Santorini, the island where I once hoped to take my last breath. I wanted my ashes to be

strewn over the blue water of Santorini with all its energy and its pomp. It was a mirror for those who could handle confrontation. Oh yes, I was able to confront Santorini. It brought me to the deepest layers in myself. After the boat was docked, the only thing waiting for us was the steep road. I wanted my small tomatoes and cucumbers and the voice of my friends. This time, it was different. This time, I wasn't alone. Together with Betty, I entered my island, my island in the sun, my Santorini.

It was early in the spring and the island was deserted. All tourist facilities were closed. It looked more like a ghost town with those banging doors in the wind. Nicos and his wife had not yet arrived. The incident at the border had taken its toll and the reason why we left for Greece was wiped out in one fell swoop. However, we still saw some sannyasins walk on the island in their red clothes and malas. They had fled from Crete to Santorini. Although we were curious as to what they had to say, we decided to have no contact with them. Such contact could be seen by the islanders. I parked our van on the black lava beach of Perissa. In the bushes next to our van, I installed a chemical toilet because I knew that many tourists just did their needs anywhere and that the Greeks hated that. Because the tourist season hadn't started, I had the speakers housed at Spiros. Despite the heavenly surroundings our relation deteriorated. At one point, the situation escalated. One day, I made coffee and Betty threw it piping hot in my face. For me, that was the last straw. With great composure, I wiped the crap out of my eyes and told her that I wanted her to leave the island and go back to the Netherlands.

55. ONLY IN SANTORINI

Because I didn't trust her, I decided to bring her to the mainland and accompany her to the airport in Athens. Meanwhile, I had called my ex-wife and asked if she was willing to let Betty live in the warehouse. Luckily, that wasn't a problem. The farewell at the airport was without emotion. It was cold and aloof. I just went back to the boat. Again, I stood on deck and watched the sea and the waves. Also, my ego came up and disappeared into thin air. Just like the water of the sea, I saw myself immersed in everything and became one with the whole. Santorini

offered me the perfect environment to do this with my VW bus, my deserted beach, and my private chemical toilet in the bushes.

On one of those days, I listened to meditation music and felt the fresh sea breeze in my face. Suddenly, I heard a voice that spoke Dutch. When I opened my eyes, I saw a man with glasses on his nose and a backpack standing in front of me. He looked like a real nature lover. "Oh, my God," he said, "I just accepted a permanent job at the university and now I see you here...that this is possible here." I didn't understand what the man was talking about. "Then just give up that job and come here," I should have responded. He looked at me and walked away. I wondered how he knew that I was Dutch. Maybe he had seen the license plate of my VW bus. Again, I closed my eyes. The music of Deuter sounded from the radio. I had it good. Yeah, oh so good. I looked at the sea. I thought back to the times I had a fear of drowning and my time in prison.

Now, I finally began to experience freedom. The divine had penetrated my heart. I wanted to express this joy in singing and writing. However, the time was not yet ripe. I was still uncertain and filled with the question, "Do you love me?" In the distance, I saw the fishermen in their boats busy with their nets. I heard the soft drone of their engines. High in the air were floating gulls which were waiting for the right moment to dive down and get a bargain. It was a day when I naturally started writing one piece after another, just like in Australia. That energy lasted for days. In my mind, I spoke to Perissa, the goddess of the island. I asked her questions and got the same response. Without thinking, I wrote everything down. I felt that this was something very special. My pen just kept writing. It was as if there was someone talking to me. With incredible gratitude, I wrote the words down. These words were sacred to me. What did I get myself into? I asked this question to myself and the goddess gave me an answer. This was something I just had to experience. Often, I reread what I wrote. Every time I did so, it brought me back to that moment of openness when the female in me came alive. It was the load, the force behind it. That force was the love of the island, the sea, and my mirror. I was on my way home. Sometimes, I was there already but I ran away again. However, now I knew the way back. Once you know where God lives, your quest is over and you run away every

time because you always know the way back. Others are still searching or standing before the door but dare not enter. Sometimes they keep knocking. The door is always open for every human being. For whatever happened in the past, true love is unconditional. It is my deepest wish that I can convey this insight to others. You should accept yourself as you are and realize that you are not your past, and that the soul is pure. The soul is the essence of our being.

Slowly, all the bars and nightclubs were open again. Every night, I went out. At Nicos' pub, I sang a few songs with my mixed tapes and went along to Spiros where I got free drinks. Around me was a group of young people who were very open to the spiritual side and mistook me for their guru or leader. I then realized the effect my songs and lyrics had on others. As if it were the most natural thing in the world, the idea of a village of love was born. We soon found a location for it. It was an old factory by the sea where tomato paste used to be processed. A Greek, who owned a lot of land and houses and was a social worker himself, spontaneously offered me a house in Emborio for a start but my heart told me that I wasn't ready.

It was strange but Santorini always offered me everything I needed at that time. There was Brian who had smuggled a brand new Harley into the country. He was about to leave the island and for a few hundred guilders, I bought his motorcycle. For years, I had a lot of fun riding across the island as it was a real Harley Davidson. One day, Lottie, a Swedish friend of mine, sat behind me as we went around the island. As always, I ended up on the other side of the island called Akrotiri where excavations were ongoing at that time. Together with Lottie, I jumped on the large volcanic boulders. The wind blew so hard in our faces that we had to shout to make ourselves understood. Suddenly, I was like Moses on the great mountain as I lifted a large stone. The stone broke in two. Lottie grabbed the other half and suddenly shouted: "My face!" Beaten with astonishment, I saw the silhouette of her face on the stone. I saw her long neck, her nose, and her eyes. She held the stone firmly on her heart with both hands and said, "I'm going to take it back back home to Sweden." Still perplexed by the discovery, we slowly walked back to the motorcycle. Suddenly, I got the idea that we could make a cast out

of the other half. We walked back and when I found it, I actually saw the hollowed imprint of her face. My heart told me that we had to cast it into the sea. With all my strength, like a Greek discus thrower I hurled the stone as far as I could into the sea. Was it a coincidence? Was it a miracle? Somewhere in Sweden is half of the stone with Lottie's face on it while the other half is hidden forever in the Greek sea. I can still hear her scream when she picked up the stone, "I have found my face, the mirror of my soul."

I enjoyed life on the island. The sun and the salty water gave me tanned skin and my hair got blonder. The fresh fish and vegetables in the country did me good. I was often exposed to salt water. With each wave, I felt like I was baptized again. Once I was so afraid of drowning and now, I enjoyed the water. It was as if God was holding me and my breath quickened. There was still a paradise on earth. Besides all these blessed events, there was also a dark side to the island. In the middle of the night when Lulu, Nicos, and I were eating on their patio, we suddenly heard shouting across the street. A woman from Spiros ran outside and a man with a large knife in his hand was behind her. He began to hit her and all of this happened a few yards away from us. The only thing we could do was to call the police. Meanwhile, both figures disappeared in the dark. Later, we heard that the woman survived the incident but the fear stayed with me. Nicos apologized to me about this incident as if he was the person responsible. That night, we didn't feel like eating and decided to rest. I went straight to bed. The sea made me a lullaby to fall asleep, "Oh Santorini, I love you so..."

One day, Nicos and I talked about life once more. I casually mentioned Osho but he laced me immediately. "Here, we don't talk about dangerous men," he said. He said that in the villages in the mountains, the old ladies in black dresses and headscarves knew that I had something to do with Osho. Ever since I was in Santorini, I didn't know where Osho was staying at the time. Perhaps he had returned to India. Why did I actually have to know? Osho said, "Once, you have to drop your master." That thought gave me peace. I was alone and just had to be on my way which was not a road but a stream, a river where I let myself drift. It was a surrender to the world, to nature, to Osho, to life, and ultimately to

myself. “Yes, surrender to yourself,” my heart said. “Become one with it and fully accept yourself.” Sometimes, when I looked at my tanned face and blue eyes in the mirror, it brightly shone with light. I had previously been seen with a grim lip and a voice filled with tears, tears of pain, abandonment and rejection. Hell on Earth also proved to be a heaven. Like a battery, the negative pole needs a positive pole to provide energy. This is how it appears to be with us.

If all people were aware of the fact that everything always goes by, then all things would get a different meaning and value. Look at your own life and see what you’re holding while inevitably one day, you’ll have to leave it all. For me, the day came that I should let go of Santorini again. It was now the middle of summer. The flow of tourists was clearly underway and I decided to return to the Netherlands.

56. WAREHOUSE—BAARN (5)

This time, I traveled through Italy. The trip did not go quite as I had hoped or better yet, not as I had hoped. The van used more fuel than I thought so I was soon out of money. In central Italy with only one can of kidney beans and a canned drink, I called Baarn whether they could to send me some money. After three days of waiting, the money came. I almost didn’t get the money because my name was misspelled on the note. Half dead from hunger, I told the bank manager that I was actually the one who was on that piece of paper. After a lot of Italian hand gestures and cackling, I finally got my money. With a guzzling Audi engine and a rapidly deflating wallet, I continued my journey to the Netherlands.

Exhausted and penniless, I arrived in the Netherlands. However, the trip had been worth it. Especially writing the book “The Goddess of Perissa” had done me good. It was not so much the content but the writing which had broken out. The female in me, my intuition, was enhanced by it. Back at the warehouse, I met Betty again. We decided that we would leave the warehouse together and hire a caravan and go to Voorthuizen. We quickly found one. Between Betty and me, everything was still amiss. At night, we were laying spoonwise and during the day,

I was writing. However, the stay in Voorthuizen was short-lived because we decided, also because of the weather, to go to Greece together again.

57. WITH BETTY TO CRETE, GREECE

The Porsche I had I traded in for a regular car and a tent. With the little money that was left in our pockets, we left for Greece towards the end of February. To earn some money, I would sing on the streets and in the car, I had an old guitar amp with reverb which I used when I sang in hotels and restaurants. We drove through France and our first stop was Arles, the city where Vincent Van Gogh, my beloved painter, lived and worked. We already had no money and nothing to eat. The first thing I did was to sit on the street and sing my own songs *Love is the Seed* and *You are the Flower*. I had barely begun when some TV station asked me if they could record my songs. "You see," I heard Betty say, "this is your day!" However, my street action brought too little money so I asked Betty to contribute by making drawings on the street and sell them. We were harassed by drunks daily. We couldn't stay here so we moved on to St. Marie in the Camargue, about 60 kilometers away. I soon learned how to increase revenues. As soon as a couple of old ladies passed by, I quickly switched over to the song *Amazing Grace*. In the end, I sang *Amazing Grace* almost the whole day.

I wanted more and began singing in restaurants. After a few songs, I passed the hat around. Slowly, we became accustomed to this way of life and survival. I sang in restaurants and Betty went around with the hat. Sometimes, I stood in the middle of a square with people dancing all around me and then sing for 5 or 6 restaurants simultaneously. I really sang my heart out. The money flowed in and came from all sides. People spontaneously threw money out the window and Betty picked those up immediately. We then earned enough money to travel. Our first destination was Italy and then Greece. With new clothes, plenty of food, and plenty of fuel on board, we left France. There, we were artists but I also felt like a beggar. Italy proved to be a very different world. We drove along the coast to Venice, Florence and Pisa, and also to Assisi, the city of St. Francis of Assisi. Just like Van Gogh, I experienced the recognition of the light, the spiritual unification. Italy laughed with us. La Bella Italia,

with its art and sense of beauty and love, was also the land of delicious spaghetti and pizza. Oh, that was Italy. Here, we immediately hit it off with people with a giving heart, drank wine, and enjoyed life.

After Italy, we traveled to Greece. Through Mykonos and Rhodes, we ended up in Crete. After a short stay there, we began the journey to the Netherlands. When we got home, it was almost Christmas. Betty's children were waiting for us. During this journey, Betty developed the strength to be without her children. She had traveled, painted, and received recognition for her work. Now, she was thrown back in her role as mother. What I remember from that last trip was the great responsibility that I felt every day. We had to make sure we had food, clothes, and enough money to buy gasoline. We also had to make sure we remained healthy because we had no health insurance or money on hand for emergencies. We relied on Osho who acted as a kind of guardian angel. What gave me the strength to make such great tours was that I traveled without a plan, without a beginning or end, and without a destination. It was timeless travel. It was the pleasure of a bird in the sky and the great freedom of flying itself. People around me often didn't understand and saw my travels as a form of escape. I never planned my trips unlike what happened to me in Australia before. I felt detached from everything and everyone. I only put gas in my car and saw where the journey took me. My trip was a trip to myself, as every journey is a journey into ourselves. We often focus on a horizon that does not exist, which later turns into an illusion. The only thing of value is the journey itself. This insight changed my life. A life dedicated to well-being and happiness is so limited. My trips were also a way of being alone, of standing on the brink of collapse, with thousands of fears of death. You no longer feel at home in this society and you feel rejected because your eyes see different things and words. Also, you speak a different language which others can't or won't hear. It's like "Father, why have Thou forsaken me?" There was the path of "Mother, hold me for I am at an abyss and I do not know what is going to happen to me. Maybe I will fall to pieces." No, my journey was not over yet. My Odyssey was not the end. Kilometer for kilometer, I was dragged through existence partly because I allowed it,

partly because I had no choice, all in complete surrender. I now see this from a perspective that I didn't know then.

This last trip with Betty had prepared the way for me to continue alone. I learned how I could make money by singing and bringing the hat around, which I never liked anyway. I now knew how to negotiate and arrange things. I learned how I could explain my feelings in songs. Even though I knew I was not the best singer in the world, I knew I had something that touched people. With my songs and singing, I managed to strum the audience's heart strings.

58. SOUTH FRANCE

Back in the Netherlands, I prepared for my next trip. This time, I would go alone, all alone. Also, this journey I began back in France. First, I went for the second time to Arles. I walked the streets where Vincent did like I wanted to step into his shoes in order to find out whether I was right with what I had seen and felt about him. I walked through the gate which Vincent walked by. Also, I saw what Vincent had seen—the famous restaurant, the trees, the sky, and the clouds. I painted them in my heart and wrote poems. I sat down on the stone bench in the garden of the hospital where Vincent had stayed for some time. I sat there and looked around. The trees, the flowers must have been unchanged. It was a small courtyard and it just felt like Vincent sat down next to me. I closed my eyes and heard his voice. Or was it my own? Still deep in meditation, I walked through the narrow streets and still, it felt like Vincent was on my side. Oh, how I loved the song about him, “*Starry, starry night, paint your palette blue and gray...*” Vincent, my dear Vincent, had to suffer, and went his own way to the light. Like me, he was also alone and misunderstood at the edge of the abyss of madness. In his way, I recognized my own. I saw the stars dancing on the earth, the blistering sun, and the leaden clouds. My heart was filled with an incredible fire to create, write, and sing.

After this experience in Arles, I traveled to Cap d'Antibes in the Riviera. I arrived on a Sunday morning and saw a stall of the Rotary Club which sold expensive second-hand clothes, jackets, trousers and shirts. They sold all the expensive brands such as Pierre Cardin and so

forth. Coincidentally or not, the whole wardrobe fit me exactly. I could take the whole trade for less than 50 euros (one hundred guilders then).

With my “new” clothes and my song repertoire, I stepped into a restaurant where I was hired immediately. My life turned into a hit. There was more money and I could now get started. I felt right at home among all the luxurious big yachts in Nice and those women who walked along the promenade with their poodles on leashes. I wondered whose clothes I had on. Did they belong to some millionaire who had a heart attack? I sang for my lunch and dinner and I had to pass the hat around myself. On previous trips, Betty did that for me. She absolutely had no problem with that. I was embarrassed to death especially if a young woman sat at one of those tables. Often, I didn’t dare to do it at the expense of my income that I needed so badly. In France, I found it more difficult to do than in other countries. Not only did I sing, I also wrote. I had written some small books of poems, copied them, and handed them off to some special people I met.

59. GUDRUN

It was one of those days when I was singing in my green jacket and Pierre Cardin white trousers. All of a sudden, I looked into the eyes of a beautiful, well-dressed young woman who was with her mother on vacation. She was staying, as I would learn later, in a hotel a little further. It was clearly one of those moments that I didn’t dare to go around with the hat. They kept coming every afternoon and evening. One evening, I went to their table and I gave them one of my books as a present. It was a real hit. I fell in love with Gudrun. During the evenings in the back of my Volvo, I dreamt of her quietly. The day after I met her and her mother on the beach, I was invited to have a drink in their hotel where I also had breakfast the next day. They noticed that I didn’t pass the hat around when they were there. They understood and forced me to do that.

In a short time, I had entered into their luxurious world and they invited me to come to Germany. “Come with us to Germany,” she said, “and I will give you everything you need.” I couldn’t believe my ears. It was somewhere in Langenargen at the Bodensee Lake in Lindau, on the

other side of the lakes of Switzerland. We walked hand in hand along the Riviera in Monaco, Cannes, and Nice. We smiled and kissed like two little kids. We were so in love. Oh, how we laughed then. In the evening after my gig, we stared at the waves while a warm evening breeze blew over the sea towards us. So, the days flew in 1989. I, the singer of light, had seen the light in her eyes. I was in love with a woman who had once fled childhood in the DDR. Her father had died young. Perhaps that was our thing in common—the lack of a father. She was the woman I could only dream of. She was so thorough, so sweet, and so beautifully dressed. She awakened the child in me, and I with her. It was love, true love. I gave more than I could give. After a few weeks, her vacation was over. At our parting, I promised that I would come to Germany as the season was over. When the season was really over, I rode my Volvo and tore the French motorways that headed to Langenargen. I drove towards the woman of my dreams who was waiting for me and who had said, “I will give you everything that you need.”

60. LANGENARGEN, GERMANY

In the middle of the night, I called her to ask where they lived exactly because I couldn't find her house. She immediately drove to me in her new Audi and after weeks of great loss, we finally met again. Quickly, she guided me to her house. That morning, she called her office to tell them that she wasn't feeling well but she didn't say it was because we both had a party, a big party. I had exchanged the back seat of my Volvo for a nice big bed in a very nice apartment on the ground floor. We hit it off right away. Our eyes shone with happiness and our hearts beat as one. Yes, she was good and sweet with her deep blue eyes. One of the first things we did was to exchange my old Volvo with its Dutch license plate and broken window for a newer Volvo station wagon with a German license plate. She also ordered a bigger wardrobe for the bedroom. I remember how I looked when she dismantled those in the store. Her mother, who lived just a few steps away from her, was initially happy with my arrival. She was a retired teacher who played the piano and loved my music. She was very lonely and her daughter was all she had in her life. Gudrun and her mother were very close. They ate together every day and continued

to do so even when I was there. That was at the expense of our privacy and gave rise to tensions. If I wanted to leave with Gudrun together, her mother always had to tag along. It was all well-intentioned but our need to be together was put to the test. For Gudrun to have any children was taboo for her mother. That created big tensions because we both wanted children very much.

What I received was great and soon, I felt established in Germany. I was showered with gifts and didn't know how it was supposed to go. It went on and on and slowly, I felt dependent on them. Both she and her mother held certain luxury lifestyles that I absolutely could not afford at that time financially. The house was in Langenargen on the Bodensee Lake. From our window, you could just see the lakes of Switzerland and Austria. We often went there to eat or drink and a purse was always on the table, a purse that wasn't mine. Gradually, I began to dislike it. I felt myself become smaller and more dependent. I could never agree to pay for them. Later, I secretly asked for the bill so that I, the man of the company, could settle it. Actually, that was even more ridiculous and humiliating. She also placed a little pack of notes on the dressing table in the bedroom which I could pick up and use. I didn't want that. My joy turned into grief, loneliness, and a sense of abandonment. I drove my new Volvo with a German license plate on German roads in search of work and a place to sing so I could be independent again and deserved my own money. I had traded in my old speakers for the best and most beautiful sound equipment. I came in contact with a certain Herr Tomik of the Sonne Group of Hotels, a hotel chain that he had set up in Germany. On the wall of his hotel were photographs of him with Pierre Cardin and Hughes Hefner of Playboy, to impress the guests and potential investors. We quickly agreed on a gig. Well-dressed and with perfect sound, I performed every evening at big dinners. I sang at tables without a hat in my hand. My girlfriend and her mother always enjoyed my performances. So, my first months in Germany were over.

During the day, when my girlfriend was at work in the tax office, I was at home working on my books and music. The neighbors didn't appreciate the noise. Slowly, my heart felt cramped in Germany. Despite all the good that I received, I increasingly got the feeling that I was

unfaithful to my heart. I was very sad and my girlfriend and her mother saw that I was unhappy. They thought that a larger home or small concerts could possibly make me happy again. So, a plan was devised. They had five thousand posters printed which were hung anywhere. Everywhere, you saw my face on the street. Also, the newspapers advertised my performances. However, despite all the efforts and publicity, no one came. We tried it again and almost no one came. For the few who did come, I gave their money back because I didn't sing. As a consolation, they got a free cassette tape with my music on it.

61. CRETE, GREECE (2)

Meanwhile, I traded my Volvo for a camper van with all the trimmings because I had decided to leave Langenargen for Greece. Not much later, I stepped into my new motorhome and with my brand new sound system and new outfits, I went on the road towards Greece. First, I went to Crete and then to Santorini. Upon my arrival in Crete, I quickly found work. While my camper was parked just outside the restaurant, I sang to the stars in the sky with my new suit and my new sound system. The people on the island had never seen anything like it. Everything went well but I couldn't get Germany out of my head. I started to doubt myself. Should I have gone away? Maybe I should have stayed with my beloved and helped her in moving and setting up her new house. Fortunately, the season would be over soon and I decided to go back to Germany. Over the phone, I heard that the move had gone well and that reassured me. Every evening, I spent time on the terrace of Nico's Dorians Pub where I felt the warm sea breezes that blew away all my sadness. I was back on my island. Yet, the day came and I drove back to Langenargen.

62. BACK IN LANGENARGEN, GERMANY

Back in Germany, things weren't as well as I had hoped, especially the relationship with her mother. They accepted my apologies for my "flee" to Greece. At one point, it all became too much and I threw everything they had bought for me at her mother's door. I couldn't take the stress anymore. One morning, I woke up and noticed that my right ear was deaf and could only hear a whirring. I immediately went to the doctor who

referred me to a specialist. She said that this could be an impending heart attack so I had to change my lifestyle radically. I was given medication and the symptoms disappeared, but my heart still felt cramped.

We tried to organize gigs in expensive hotels but nobody wanted to listen to the singer of light. Eventually, most of the concerts were canceled due to lack of interest. In Seefeld, Austria which was 1,500 meters high in the mountains, I had some success. Between the rain showers there, I sang from my heart. Most tourists were Dutch and Italians.

We loved each other but we both saw that we couldn't go any further. A friend had told her about me, "he came rapidly and he will go rapidly" and that statement appeared to be true. I had to continue on my way. That sounded selfish but it wasn't. It was just the way to egolessness, a road riddled with huge pain because I had to leave the one I loved. Sometimes, I had a hard time that I couldn't sleep in the house and just spent the night sleeping in my car. It gave me back the feeling of freedom, the freedom and fun of the wanderer. After one of those nights that I had spent alone in a parking lot, I left the woman I loved dearly. At our farewell, she said with big tears in her eyes that I could take whatever I needed for my onward journey. With tears in my eyes, I left for the umpteenth time in my life a woman and a world of opulence and wealth. She was a woman who knew I had to go back into the world and look for myself. I realized that by my departure, I had pushed her into solitude with her mother in that big house.

With all this sorrow in my heart, I traveled through Germany on the way to Austria. However, along the way I changed my mind and I decided to go to the Netherlands. Even there, I didn't find what I was looking for. From the Netherlands, I called her and learned that they had a hard time after I left. We both felt miserable and lost. In the Netherlands, I couldn't drive with a German license plate so I had to return to Germany to sell the camper there. It had been a gift from her to me. I gained DM 45,000 at the last minute. With the proceeds from the camper, I flew to Crete to spend the winter and write. Suddenly, I heard the voice which I hadn't heard for a long time. It was the voice that told me that I would die when I was 54.

In Crete, it was winter and the island was deserted. I could therefore afford any apartment that I wanted. I also bought a motorcycle which I rode into the mountains so I could be in silence. Slowly, I came back to rest and I felt Osho in my heart. Crete did me good even in winter.

Everyday, I wrote lyrics and songs. Something always brought me back into the moment. On one of those moments, there blew a wind from a corner of the room in my apartment and Osho's voice that said, "Now you come, now you come." For a moment, I thought I was just imagining things but I heard it again. While I struggled with whether or not I had to go to India, I was always afraid of the ego-death that awaited me there. However, the situation was different now. I had the money and nothing stopped me. At that time, Osho was in India and that voice drew me like a magnet towards India. My heart was filled with incredible love for Osho. I sold my bike, said goodbye to my apartment, and flew to Athens to quickly arrange a visa for India. Once in Athens, I was told that I had previously been in the Netherlands and had to get my visa there. So, I flew to the Netherlands where I visited my old warehouse while waiting for my visa.

Chapter 6

Poona (1989-1990)

63. POONA, INDIA

I slept in the room downstairs where Jan Foudraine had his office. I stayed at the warehouse for about a week. I sold some stuff for extra travel money. I retained my guitar and some recording equipment. My ex-wife and my girlfriend Betty took me to the airport. Within a day, I would land in Bombay. I heard that I couldn't tell anyone where I was going because I ran the risk of being immediately returned even if nothing in my luggage betrayed my destination. In Bombay, I was happily untouched by the customs. Once outside, a man came up to me and asked me where I was going. I saw and immediately felt that he was not a taxi driver but a police officer. I pretended I didn't understand and said, "No, I don't need a taxi." He got angry. I said again, "Me need no cab, me stay in Mumbai." Eventually, he gave up and let me go. Before I knew it, I was on the bus to Poona, about 400 kilometers from Mumbai.

On the way, I looked around. What struck me was the sheer number of people and enormous poverty. It was the culture shock they had warned me about. At first, I closed my eyes but I kept looking. We drove through the slums of Mumbai where people were seemed to live in tents and shacks. No, I wasn't happy there. I wanted the first plane back home but it was practically impossible. My trip was made in a Chinese airline which would only fly from Mumbai next week. Actually, anyone who criticizes should be sent to India for a while. I also had to get used to the way the Indians moved their head left and right every time they talked. They apologized for everything they said.

The bus climbed through the mountains. Over time, the landscape became greener. I saw flowers everywhere and my heart took a little rest. I rediscovered the love in myself, the same love that had prompted me to make this journey. It was the love of Osho that called on me when I was on Crete. The bus drove through the mountains along creepy precipices. Once in Poona, I booked a room at the first hotel I saw. The hotel room

was not much. There was a bed and a big fan on the ceiling turned above the bed. Otherwise, there was nothing. Later, it turned out that I was a few kilometers away from the ashram so the next day, I went looking for a place closer to the ashram. It seemed like Osho's energy in me had become stronger. I was so close and my heart beat like crazy with fear and emotion. It felt like I was dying again. "Help me," said a tiny voice inside me. It was the voice of a small boy but no one heard me. India made me insecure and frightened me. I wasn't able to withstand so much misery and poverty. On the street, I had to step over a dead man and a crippled old man, and dodge screaming kids and shake them off me. They were those who said, "Give me money. Give me money." I heard Osho say, "Giving nothing helps. That way, you confirm their poverty and keep them small. Teach them to prefer to make money." However, what do you do when you see a starving child? That child needed to eat now and needed someone. I myself had exchanged security and prosperity for an uncertain future, but I could still return if the need should arrive.

The next day, I found a hotel room near the ashram. It wasn't too expensive. I found the street where the ashram was located. It was a long road with many stalls and sanniyasins were everywhere. At the end of that road was the gate that gave access to the ashram. To be admitted, you must first submit to an AIDS test and pay a small amount. I had my results with me and I was admitted straight away. The feeling upon entering the ashram was overwhelming. I was speechless. It felt like I had come home. My tears flowed. I was really just a few feet away from Osho. I looked around and saw that it was all there—the pond, swans, plants, flowers, and the huge Buddha. Almost everyone was in red. It was not mandatory but I decided to buy such a robe the next day, a red one for daytime and a white one for the evening. I was so overwhelmed by the beauty, light, and energy that I no longer noticed when a sanniyasin took me on a tour of the site. I only came back to my senses when he said to me, "Look, there lives Osho." Thousands of golden tears ran down my cheeks. Sobbing, I walked away and my heart sang, "*We are flowers in your garden, opening, opening.*" It was the same song I sang on the bus to Oregon. Now it was different, essentially different. My feet were walking on clouds and my head was surrounded by stars. I began to experience

the home stretch. It was unreal to see. In my own life, Osho had already been a central figure but now, I saw that the whole world was touched by him. It gave me a sense of attachment.

The next morning, I bought a red and a white robe. With my white shoes, Gazelle sunglasses, Rolex, and diamond ring which I had received from my German friend Gudrun, I looked radiant and felt it, too. When I walked in, I was floating above the street. I struggled to stay grounded. It was like I was drawn upwards to the light and at the same time, I went down to the abyss, my abyss of death. Like an old medieval monk, I walked in my red robe along the paths of the ashram. I sat down on the large, white Buddha statue and looked at it. Sometimes, I closed my eyes and vanished into thin air. I felt fear and I felt dead. I quickly went somewhere to smoke a cigarette because smoking was the incense of your own soul, I had read somewhere. It was only my second day in the ashram and I noticed that there were a lot of Germans who mainly were concerned with the organization. That night—for the first time in my spotless white robe—I was ready to be “sniffed”—because no odors or scents were allowed—before being admitted to the Buddha hall. Osho would be present that evening but I was not ready to go in and sit still for three hours.

Suddenly, there stepped in a beautiful young woman with a baby in her arms. She had dark brown eyes and as young as she was, she spoke to me in half German half-English. She and her child had come from Germany. The child had an unknown father. I was perplexed at her openness and courage. She chose me and before I knew it, I was walking through the ashram pushing the pram of a little boy of 10 months. That evening, the party continued. We slept together like a real couple with a baby next to us. At the beginning of this journey, I was reminded of my fears and doubts. Here was a young woman who had made the same trip with a baby. The miracles were not out yet, I thought.

It was known that children were not as desirable to the Bhagwan movement at that time. A child's growth would only stand in the way. Osho said that we certainly had no time to raise children. I felt that the sannyasins looked at us while I wasn't even the father. It was Jesus himself who said, “Let the children come to me.” My inner child was

awake. I saw God in children in their purity, unity of time, openness, and freedom. I knew that every man must be reborn to be able to find God.

Overwhelmed with joy, overwhelmed by the light, but also with a dark fear of death, I moved in the ashram. I was there and I wasn't there. I don't know how to describe it. My movements became slower because I was more into the moment. Besides that, the rest was constant fear. I was dying while I was on the way to the ashram. The deepest fears came back to me like the fear of drowning and the fear of death. I was dying again but this time. I was surrounded by wonderful people who said I looked beautiful. I remember thinking to myself, "How can that be? I'm going to die!"

At one time, I was at the river with the mother and her baby. She placed an arm around me and said softly, "Just one small step Alok, and then you're home." I had yelled all these years, "I'm dying!" Nobody understood me and they put me in prison and institutions. Now, I had to die again. I now heard music, lyrics, and songs playing in my head. It didn't stop and every time, I quickly ran to my room to capture one song after another.

One evening, I was back in the queue to be sniffed by the Buddha hal. I almost wasn't allowed in because I smelled like cigarette smoke. Quickly, the mother of the child apologized me by saying, "It's his first time. He has just arrived." I was pushed in my back which was a sign that I could walk through. Suddenly, I stood with thousands of others in the big Buddha hall. I stayed with fear in the auditorium. Osho suddenly appeared. After releasing some energy in a characteristic manner, he sat down on a chair. I saw a little man in the distance and his light filled me with tremendous joy, strength, and love. I drank the heavenly happiness. Yes, I was drunk with happiness. How could that be? However, it was so! After I left the Buddha, it was like my feet didn't touch the ground. Next to me was a mom who was also from Europe and naturally, we walked to a stall where they sold crystals. I picked one that had power. She suggested going back to my hotel and soon, we were naked and drunk with love in bed. The love was so intense that the bed, which was big and heavy, was moved to one side of the room by the sheer force of

our energies. Because of the intense experience in the Buddha hall, I no longer feared getting old. I was afraid that I would just disappear from the Earth.

One day, I was meditating when I suddenly saw Jan Foudraïne walk in. I went to greet him. I wanted to hug him like an old comrade but he indicated that he wasn't amused and kept walking. I saw that he sat down somewhere else. I wasn't satisfied with his response and sat down beside him. He snapped at me, "I'm talking to someone else." I was beaten by stupidity. I sat next to the man I had sought for so many years. Many had called him an arrogant bastard and now, I began to believe it myself.

Every night, I stood with hundreds of others waiting for Osho to pass by in his Rolls-Royce. I saw a pair of headlights approaching. The enchanting green lanterns that were hung with the plants and flowers created a very mystical atmosphere. My heart was pounding after seeing Osho but I didn't went to the Buddha hall, but walked to the river, to the Burning Ghat, where the dead were cremated. There I sat in silence on a bench, in full surrender. I lost my fear of death and felt a total relaxation. Again and again, I went to that same spot. Later, I discussed this with Jan Foudraïne but he thought it was only ego-tripping. Personally, I felt very different. I was afraid of going mad, of dying. My heart was screaming, "I'm dying!" That agony, that fear of death, die while you are still alive, that ain't right, is it ?

I had brought my beautiful Ovation guitar and recording equipment just in case. I looked for a spot by the bushes and flowers and sang the first songs I had written, "*In the night...I saw the light...tell me where heaven is...if the earth turns around.*" One day, someone asked me to take part in a concert and I immediately said yes. After some preparation, I stood on the stage to sing with a band and accompanied myself on the guitar. For a moment, I thought the audience didn't like what I did but it turned out otherwise. With all my heart, I sang the famous song by Elvis Presley *Can't Help Falling in Love*. While my voice echoed around the bamboo bushes, in my mind I saw Osho sitting at home in his chair and my heart said "This song is for you."

I was somewhere on a terrace outside the ashram when a sanyassin who I knew from Holland approached me. She immediately said to me,

"Oh God, if you're here in Poona, this means something is bound to happen." I told her that Osho had called on me when I was on Crete. We suddenly heard a loud bang not far away from us. It was as the lightning had struck. A large monkey had jumped on an electrical wire and was electrocuted before it fell down. We were completely blown away. "Yes," I heard the sannyasin say. "There is much to be done. Look, it happens a lot now." A moment later, I heard that Vivek, Osho's girlfriend, had just committed suicide and was cremated in silence. Yes, death was near. Even the beautiful sannyasin whom I had just met was pelted with stones when she was just walking off the field. Such stories I began to hear more and more.

With my friend from Berlin whom I had experienced "crystal nights", I went to the Burning Ghat one evening. While we sat on a bench by the river, we heard the distant sounds of the Buddha. She wanted to play the guitar and sing. I had the microphone ready and when she started to sing, we heard a scream from afar. A man came up to us with a large stone in his hand. He wanted to throw it at us. In the face of death, my girlfriend jumped up, put the guitar down, and knelt with folded hands which meant "I salute the light within you." Just like a miracle, the man put the stone down.

On another day, there was a knock on the door of my room. A female sannyasin from Australia came to thank me for healing her with my singing. She pushed me to the heart that I had to do something with this gift. She came from Tasmania and said she was a doctor in literature. Again, a woman came to India because she felt she was being called, I thought.

One day, Jan Foudraïne asked me if I wanted to read a small book which he had written the manuscript. I couldn't wait and went straight to my hotel to read it. After just a few hours, I had finished reading it. I took the manuscript back to the ashram and gave it back to Jan. He couldn't believe I had already read it. He asked, "What did you think?" I said, "I miss your feelings, Jan." The next day, I saw him writing on a large table under the sun. Wordlessly, I brought him a cup of coffee with a cookie and walked away. I loved that man so much. He really wanted the Netherlands to walk in red. He wanted to share his diamond with

everyone, regardless of the price, which he and others had to pay for. "Thank you," I heard him say in the distance. I turned for a moment and nodded. I sat down in another part of the ashram, picked up my guitar, and began to sing, "*...sitting in your garden of love in your new creation, seeing all the people from all nations...being one love, being one sound...going around and around.*"

It was a daily ritual, singing in the ashram. I didn't join groups because I felt that I had been through enough in my life. I regularly went to the beautiful garden of the Buddha statue. Sometimes when I was sitting there, the fear of dying came back. By holding on to the fear, nothing new can be born. Only by letting go, the old dies and there will be room for the new. By dying, life comes back. It is a matter of surrender, like all of life is a surrender to yourself. In marriage, you give yourself to the other who is a mirror of your true face. My fire was sparked and the holy smoke went up. One of my favorite memories involves the observation of a beautiful mother from Germany. She said, "You're afraid of your strength! Whenever you shoot back into the past, you become that little boy again. You're afraid of what and who you really are. In reality, you are a guy with so much force that you yourself are afraid of." It was something I had never heard of. It was a very different approach than the endless tinkering with my own past through regression therapy which I had more than enough. "That is all I have to say," she said. Then, something happened to me. I got up and felt an enormous strength in my legs and stomach, and then my whole body. Moments later, the little boy came up again. That experience never left me. It was a great turning point in my life and was grateful for that insight. Every time, I said to myself, "You're afraid of your strength" and it worked. It was one of the greatest gifts in my life. Simple, huh? It was time for the Zorba, the emergence of the stallion in me.

In the ashram, I also met an Indian doctor who lived in the first Bhagwan center in the Netherlands which I sometimes visited in the beginning. He was one of the first who had followed Osho. I felt he was enlightened but he said nothing about it. One evening, when we were having a drink at a restaurant, I saw a certain look in his eyes. I knew he was very far away in his thoughts. His way of life was "Do nothing", as

Osho had said. "Let the grass grow naturally." I remembered that while the others were worshipping in the morning, he came late as he had showered. I heard the others who were hard at work say, "It's his way of doing nothing."

The weeks flew by. In a few weeks' time, I would fly back to the Netherlands. I was sick, very sick. I was dying in agony. I felt weak and had no strength to stand. The owner of the hotel where I stayed found a doctor who didn't know what was going on with me. I was in my hotel room on a large double bed while the electric fan above my head turned. My life began to play like a movie before my eyes. Everything I had experienced in the past, I saw time and time again. For days, I was very weak and half petrified. I didn't eat anything and just drank a little. I was resigned that my death was near because I knew what it meant when you lived your life like a film. Then, there came a time when my body was filled with power. My arms and legs were strong and powerful again. I remember getting up at six in the evening and thought of getting some food and drinks at the ashram. I walked the streets and went to a restaurant where I ate regularly. Normally it was always bursting with sannyasins but this time, I was all alone on the terrace. I ordered a plate of rice and a Coke. I only had rice because I hadn't eaten for a long time and felt that I wasn't quite back on Earth. I sat there for a couple of minutes when the waiter came to me and said, "Don't you know that Osho has passed away?" It didn't immediately dawn on me what he said. "Yes, yes," I said, but I thought he was joking around. I quietly ate my plate of rice and drank my glass of cola empty. I was still alone on the terrace when a young woman dressed in red on a bike stopped in front of me and shouted, "Osho is dead!" At 7 pm, we were expected in the Buddha Hall all dressed in white. I felt a huge jolt of energy rise to my head. She saw what happened to me and I heard her scream, "Feel your heart, swami. Feel your heart!" Suddenly, I felt an unprecedented strength rise in me. I quickly paid the waiter, jumped into a rickshaw, and drove back to my hotel. The hotel manager had also been informed of Osho's death. I remember he asked me whether this would mean the end of the ashram and thus of his hotel. I told him that this was only the beginning and reassured him that a lot of people would come to Poona.

I quickly walked to the house, put on my white robe, then hurried off to the ashram. When I got there, everything seemed upside down. Everywhere in the Buddha Hall were layers of clothes and shoes. The people stood with faces full of disbelief, some crying. This time, we were not sniffed before we were allowed in the Buddha Hall which was just as well, because I had the nerve to smoke. Later, it was found out that many didn't know of the news and dined somewhere or went to Goa for a few days. Everyone waited for an official statement from Osho's physician. I felt powerful and waited patiently on what would happen. I remember Osho saying that there was negative energy in the Buddha Hall because some people did bad things. Was that why I was afraid of the Buddha Hall? Could that have possibly caused Osho's death? I remembered what the woman said to me, "If you're here in Poona, something is bound to happen." Also, I heard Osho's voice which called on me when I was on Crete, "Now you come, now you come." Here I was, at a very important moment in history. Osho was dead and his body would shortly go up in smoke, "...a burning fire, turning all around..."

Osho was carried on a kind of stretcher surrounded by flowers which was placed on the stage. I stood on my toes and looked at my master. I felt feelings of joy, sadness, and relief. Did he not say, "Kill your master" and now he himself was dead, or rather, he had left his body. However, what was that relief I thought I saw in others? Osho himself once said, "If I'm not in my body, I'll follow you to every corner of the world." In fact, it would be easier for him to follow us if he was dead. In the speech that followed, we were informed that Osho's body would be burned at around 20:00. We were also told how he had died. His physician appeared on stage and told that Osho died from a cardiac arrest and that he had distributed among a number of immediate followers his last personal belongings. At 20:00, we gathered outside the gate. In the distance, I saw Jan Foudraine finding his way through. I heard my friend Atma say, "I will go to the pub because he is not in his body." I thought, "How can you say that now?" I joined in the procession which consisted of perhaps a thousand people. In front of the procession, the stretcher with the body of Osho was carried by his followers. For the last time, Osho went through the streets of Poona to the Burning Ghat.

We walked through the streets while the traffic roared past us. I saw many surprised faces of locals along the way. A part of the procession went towards another direction all of a sudden. I never understood why. Suddenly, I was right behind the body of Osho. In my experience, it was like I was alone walking behind his dead body. It seemed fair to see hell and heaven at the same time in the midst of that traffic. The warmth of the evening oppressed me. I didn't understand where the thousands of sannyasins were.

Osho was placed on one of the burning sites. Along with perhaps a thousand or more others, I watched from afar while wood was piled on Osho. We sang in the darkness of the night, "*The universe is singing a song, the universe is dancing along, the universe is singing on a day like this.*" We kept repeating this song. A sannyasin who was a German therapist came to stand beside me. I placed my arm around her to give her energy. After that, I gave her a push in the back and said, "Now, you have to go alone." A moment later, I saw her dancing and singing. The whole place was now full of sannyasins. I looked at the crowd and watched the last wooden blocks being laid on Osho. Only his face was visible. When I looked back, I saw that last bit was also covered with wood. That was the last thing I saw. That image, that last moment, has always remained with me. Slowly, the fire grew. Clouds of smoke rose up. That was our master. Time stood still and we were all quiet. This was deep, very deep. There was an unreal silence and tranquility where one kind of grace came from. It was a love that filled my heart and that of others. The flames got bigger and the smell of smoke reached my nose. "Goodbye, Master," my heart said. "This is the biggest day of the Earth. This is the second time I'm with you and now, you've left your body. Thank you for all you have given me. You have allowed to me live." My heart sang, "*The universe is singing a song, the universe is dancing along...*"

While they sang and danced, Osho's body kept burning until only some smoldering ashes of bones and wood remained. In the dark of night, my heart was filled with a great light. With that feeling in my heart, I walked back to the ashram. Along the way, I came across crying and bewildered sannyasins who had just heard of what happened. They had just come back from their evening dinner or a few days at the beach

of Goa. Under a tree, they tried to process their grief. I cried but my tears were of gratitude. Meanwhile, it was midnight. The stars twinkled in the sky and I heard Osho say, "I'll be where Jesus, Buddha, Krishna, and so many others will be. I leave you my dream."

Through the dark night with its shining stars, I walked back to the ashram. I felt relief, or was it relief? At the big gate of the ashram, there was no one to control us. The whole ashram was almost deserted. Clothes and shoes lay here and there. I walked past the vegetarian restaurant. The food was vainly waiting for customers. The shop where Osho's books and videos were sold was quiet. As my nose pressed against the glass, I realized what a treasure Osho had left behind. It is said that he had written 600 books. Suddenly, I burst into tears—tears of gratitude, sorrow, and emotion. Again, I looked inside and saw a few posters. At that moment, I felt that Osho wasn't dead but alive. I saw that famous smile of his and his hands were in the namaste salute which meant "I salute the light within you."

When my eyes fell on a book called "Socrates Poisoned Again", on the cover was a picture of Osho in Crete, whose government ordered him to leave under the threat that if he refused, they would blow up the villa he was staying in. At the sight of that book and picture, I cried out, "I'm going back to Crete as your "singer of light", the name that you have given me. I will sing to the stars in heaven." Suddenly, I felt an incredible energy and the tears continued to flow. "Alok Gayaka," I heard a voice softly. "Alok Gayaka, singer of light." Never did a name feel so fitting for me. When I got the name, I told Jan Foudraine about it and he only said, "You are not your name!" With that remark, he confused me tremendously. His voice gradually disappeared and was replaced by a new strength, a force of light.

I ordered some food and sat down at a table under the trees. With every bite, I looked up and thought, "There's Osho, Jesus, and Buddha. They are so much more enlightened somewhere." After I had finished eating, I got up and noticed that my feet were very light. I took a rickshaw back to my hotel. That night, I suddenly woke up. A song came falling from the sky and came to me. Because I didn't want to forget,

I quickly grabbed my recorder and played the song on my guitar. The song contained almost no words, just “sjalalala, sjallaaaaa, a Buddha is born again.” It just kept repeating and got higher and higher. I also wrote poems. It was like a soft lightning had struck me. I couldn’t understand it. However, there are some things you really can’t understand.

The next morning, I woke up early. I took a rickshaw back to the ashram. There was a great silence everywhere. There was something missing. That something was Osho. There were a couple of photographers and TV people around. Maybe they were waiting for some miracle to happen. Maybe they thought we would commit suicide but it didn’t happen. On the contrary, there was serenity. It seemed like there was a sense of relief now that Osho had left his body. Had he not proclaimed, “Kill your master” as the last step to enlightenment? That day, I learned that the ashes of Osho would be placed in an urn and brought to the ashram. The urn would be placed on a rock with the message, “Osho was born and never died”, including the date of his death. I went along the procession with thousands of others with a bag full of rose petals. Osho’s brother held the copper urn. As he passed by, the people threw the rose petals in the direction of the urn. Suddenly, the procession stopped. The copper urn was at that time less than a foot away from me. My eyes stared at the urn where the remains of my master were. I also sprinkled some rose petals on the urn. I also had died although I wasn’t so aware of it. I realized that this was a very big event. The procession continued and went towards the direction of the ashram. Most sannnyasins followed the procession to the ashram. I promised to return to the place where Osho was buried. In a few days, I was flying back to the Netherlands. Before that, I had to do something important. I walked back to the burning site. I felt the strong need to take a part of Osho’s body. With some tissues, I took some of the residue. I took something that looked like a piece of skull. I folded the tissue with respect and placed it in my pocket. For me, it was too sacred. With this piece, I had a bone relic which went back to the Netherlands with me.

That evening, Amrito, Osho’s physician, informed us what exactly happened and how Osho left his body. He had a cardiac arrest, a

conscious death. I put my question there. Was he murdered or poisoned by thallium? Who knows? What hugely appealed to me were the last words of Osho. "I leave you my dream..." While Amrito spoke, I heard a rooster crowing at a very unusual hour. This time, I looked between the bamboos and listened. A few meters away from me were a number of people and I still remember the large negative energy that came at me. I was terrified and wanted to run away. Was this what Osho wanted to make clear to us just before his death, that there were people with a terrible negative energy that visited the ashram? I suddenly remembered the lectures of Jan Foudraïne where on the first row, people sat with crosses on their chests and Jan was afraid that they wanted to murder him. It was the same negative charge but a thousand times stronger.

That night, I put my tape recorder back on, grabbed my guitar, and recorded the song that came through my mind, *I Leave You My Dream*. These were Osho's last words. It is the song that has been downloaded from my website by thousands of people all over the world. During the last days before my departure, I sat as usual in the smokers' temple. When I played *I Leave You My Dream* for the first time, an Indian-looking man approached me with tears in his eyes. He knelt in front of me and said, "What can I give you?" as if I were God. I replied, "Your tears are enough." He looked at me like I was a prince, got up, and walked away. I felt that I had found my purpose. I was beyond death. My feet were barely touching the ground. I was bathed in a pure light. My heart was more open. I felt that it was time to return to the Netherlands.

I ate with friends at a nice restaurant between the plants and trees. During the meal, I said that I wanted to start a village of love on the island of Santorini in Greece. My dining companions proclaimed, "Of course! Let us know when you're ready." A voice inside me told me to start a village. At first, I thought I was crazy but afterwards, it didn't feel so strange. Santorini was my home. The beauty and energy of the island had brought so much light. It was now time to say goodbye. As a farewell present, I gave my friend a tape with some songs from the live recordings of the Burning Ghat. She was visibly pleased and said, "This is a historical document. I will be careful with it." I said softly, "Yes." Moments later, I sat in the taxi on the way to the airport. In a haze of

well-being and happiness, I arrived at Bombay Airport. Goodbye, India. Goodbye, Osho. I will return to meditate with you but I don't know when.

Chapter 7

Traveling through Europe 2 (1990-1997)

64. WAREHOUSE, BAARN, THE NETHERLANDS

With no fixed place of residence, without money, but rich in priceless experiences, I set foot on Dutch soil with a piece of Osho in my hand, wrapped in a white napkin. In the Netherlands, it was now the middle of winter. I thought I could live in the warehouse in Baarn. I called my ex-wife from Schiphol but the answer wasn't what I was expecting. She said she absolutely didn't want me sleeping there. I couldn't understand it. Maybe she was afraid of something. Was it me?

There I was, in the cold of the night with my suitcase and guitar, with no place to go. For me, it was one of the worst experiences. With no other choice, I called my ex-wife again and I explained that I had nowhere to go. This time, she showed a little more understanding. I could only stay a few days, she said. I quickly took the train to Baarn. On arrival at the center, I saw a makeshift flower wreath as a sign of welcome. My ex-wife opened the door and my ex-girlfriend Betty was present. I drank coffee at the large wooden table downstairs. Suddenly, I found myself in a very different world, so cold and chilly. It felt like my face was pelted with stones. The death of Osho had not gone unnoticed in the Netherlands. The newspapers had been full of scandals about this sex guru with his Rolex watches and 99 Rolls Royces. The homecoming felt like a defeat, a huge disappointment. I came from a very different world that I couldn't share with anyone in the Netherlands. Was it now a reality that this was a world that was sleeping? How could I continue sharing my experiences? I remember when I played the songs I had written in India. It was played to the tune of "*Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall, Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.*" My own songs, which I cherished as diamonds, weren't too much of a hit. That was a huge disappointment for me.

65. VLISSINGEN

During those first days in the Netherlands, I was busy looking for a new place for myself and Betty, who also had to leave the building. We soon found a place with old friends. We were relieved and pleased with their offerings and we were received with love. My friend came from England and had established himself in the Netherlands as a clown. All my problems seemed over until I noticed that Betty couldn't handle my power. It was all too much for her and I felt that it was better if I found another place to live. Even if I had little money, I got a room in a big house in Vlissingen in the middle of the city. I could still imagine that big chair with Osho in it. Everything I saw on television, all the images of violence, shocked me.

To raise some money, I sold some gold jewelry that I had. They were the last cards that I could play. Not far from Vlissingen was a farmhouse which was an Osho center. One day, we were invited to go there to watch Osho's cremation. After the video, I played all the songs I made in India but I saw that they weren't too pleased. The head of the center came to me and said that I had sung with a tone of "Fuck you!" I was frightened to death and looked at her with disbelief. With sadness in my heart, I left the center. What was the matter with this country? I wanted to share something with these people and they threw it back in my face. That evening, I was back in the big chair, looked at the stars, and heard Osho say, "I am where Jesus, Buddha, and Krishna is" and I thought, "Oh, I was there but..."

But no, I wasn't there. I ended up with a hard slap on cold Dutch soil. It was around that time that Atma—the doctor who I met in India—called me to ask how it went with me. The gesture moved me. I could hardly believe that after all the rejections, someone sincerely meant well with me. My friend Basera, the clown, saw that all wasn't well with me and said that I had to pick myself up. Otherwise, I would be crazy with my energy. He suggested setting up a center for creation with other artists. This idea played in my head while I was driving in an old car from Vlissingen to Middelburg. Along the highway, something very strange happened. I got a huge blow to my forehead. I got a charge of energy that I lost control of my steering wheel and nearly went off the road. I

put the car to the side and got out. Suddenly, I was in a meadow with flowers where everything was beautiful. It felt like heaven on earth. I saw how green the grass was and how beautiful the flowers were. I felt so good and happy. While the cars raced past me, I walked through the pasture with the wonder of a child who saw everything for the first time. I slowly walked back to the car and went behind the wheel. When I drove away, I soon realized that I had no control. I couldn't continue driving. I got out of the car and walked through the meadow. Again, I felt the same unity and well-being. I calmly decided to drive back to Vlissingen and for a few times, I lost control and had to get out again. Finally, I got home in one piece.

Meanwhile, the idea of setting up a creation center already had spread and several sannyasins from various countries like France and the Netherlands already wanted to join us. Our home was quickly filled with all kinds of people, mostly artists. Thus arose a music group that had most of the ways of the Salvation Army. Basera quickly became close friends with a German swami who could play the guitar very well. This was very much to my chagrin because I was very sensitive to their daily moods. I wanted to keep the heart pure but it didn't work with this bunch of stoners who occasionally acted like they came from another planet. Anyway, we planned to establish a band. Together with the German swami guitarist, I made some demos. We also wanted to act and for that, we needed new equipment. We drove to Germany because the equipment was cheaper there. During that trip to Germany, we submitted our joint demos at New Earth Records in Munich. Unfortunately, they didn't like our demos but they did show interest in my live recordings from Osho's cremation at Poona. Only once did we have a joint activity. That was in a pub in Vlissingen but that was a huge letdown. We weren't a good combination. This was not pure; it was not what Osho would have wanted. I was in need of purity and peace, a feeling of home, the oneness with nature. Again, I heard a voice cry within me, "Greece!"

66. WITH MA ANAND IN CRETE (3) GREECE

Meanwhile, there was a young "ma" from Paris who came to live with us. She was called "Ma Anand". We fell in love and soon made love

like crazy. Oh, I needed that love, warmth, sex, and kissing. This was because I felt rejection around me everywhere. We made plans to go to my beloved Greece. She had a nice voice and a beautiful appearance. We left Vlissingen and the others behind. In my heart, I felt sorrow for the people I left behind but I just couldn't live with them anymore. I was accustomed to change. The journey was like a honeymoon that never ended. We drove through Germany and found a nice hotel in Austria. For a moment, I was considering whether we should still continue but the road pointed us to Greece. And on we went through Yugoslavia towards Greece. Meanwhile the car was concerning us. The black exhaust smoke was getting worse. There was no way back and I didn't want to go back. Occasionally, my Parisian ma got an anxiety attack and said she wanted to return to Paris. However, those attacks were always manageable. As always, we stopped in Belgrade for those delicious burgers. I felt like a king with my Frenchwoman with her jet-black hair. Oh, how I loved her. My body was burning excess energy. What a gift it was to come my way. Her French accent just made my blood boil, "Mon Cherie, kiss me." And I did, oh yes, I did. We both felt that this was the way we should go. It was given to us and we both drank the wine of life.

At the border of Yugoslavia, we could just drive to Greece after a routine check. Once across the border, the sun was shining and the smell of the sea came to meet me. I had come home again. It was early April so the whole season was still ahead of us. Yes, it was my Greece, my promised land, my home, my present, past, and my future. I remembered the promise I made to Osho in Poona that I would return to Crete as a sannyasi to sing the songs I had written in India. From the border to Athens was about 500 kilometers. It was a wonderful journey through the spring landscape with flowers and smells of the sea. We drove through small villages and reached Delphi. Oh, I was mad about Delphi. At the fountain where in ancient days they went speaking in oracles, I drank the pure water. Just one look at the valley was enough to bring you to the light. About 200 kilometers away from Piraeus, our old Volkswagen began to show signs of trouble. The radiator was giving out smoke signals. The exhaust was doing the same thing. Maybe we needed

a new exhaust system or maybe a whole new engine. I didn't want to think about it. We were happy if we had something to eat every day.

We just passed through another small piece of Athens and were soon at the harbor where the boat that would take us to Crete was docked. The kiosks for tickets, the smell of diesel, the salty water, the snack bars with their smell of donuts and croissants, the Greeks who shouted to the tourists in their expensive BMWs and Mercedes while they were led on board—all those memories came back to life and my heart said, “You're home. This is your home. Here, your Zorba comes alive.” With my Parisian friend at my side, I stood at the railing as the boat departed. It was seven in the evening. The next morning at 7 am, we arrived at Heraklion. That night, we stood together on the deck under the stars and we occasionally fell asleep in a sleeping bag. With a romantic feel, we looked out over a sea of love and saw dolphins dance for us. When it was morning, Heraklion came into view with its famous old city walls. After we disembarked, we wanted to get out of the city as quickly as possible because it was nasty and dirty. Once outside the city, we suddenly came to a heavenly paradise. We drove through the mountains and saw the deep blue sea in the distance. In Rethymno, we found a small hotel. It was early in the season so we had no problems finding one. At the reception, we were told that they had a special room for us. The room looked pretty good and because we were tired, we said “yes” quickly. However, when we both were undressed in bed, we noticed that something was wrong. We looked at a cabinet with a mirror. Immediately, we felt that it was a one-way mirror. Whether it was true or not, we never found out. I covered the mirror with a blanket and the next day, we checked out immediately. Luckily, the next day I got help from a friend who was a travel agent and also owned several apartments. For a small amount, we got a room in one of his apartments. Because our money ran out, we started singing and making demo recordings. My girlfriend, who had quite a nice voice, already knew three songs. We also made posters for hotels on a photocopier. We were two lovers and no one could tell our age difference of more than 15 years. Furthermore, she looked like a Greek so we were offered a lot of work. The fees weren't too high but were enough to live on. Sometimes, we didn't have work and it was

important to quickly find something else. Then, I stepped in a large hotel and explained that I could make them a lot of money if they let me sing there. I saw dollar signs, or rather drachma characters, in their eyes and we quickly agreed on it. The month of May had started but it didn't run as smoothly as we had hoped. The terrors of my girlfriend, who became more violent, threw a spanner in the works.

Sometimes while we drove around the island, she would have another panic attack and I had to calm her down. Often she said that she wanted to return to France because her father wanted her to work as a secretary in the Netherlands. She spent several months in therapy at the Osho therapeutic center in Egmond aan Zee. They were heavy, intensive groups but I doubted they had helped her. I discovered that she was sexually abused by thirty different men in a month's time. She was very attractive and beautiful and I could imagine that everyone wanted to have her. I felt great shame and guilt but dared not to talk about it with her.

The days were spent eating, drinking, practicing some songs during the day, and driving around the island in our smoking Volkswagen. Even by Greek standards, it was a real barrel. Luckily, I still had my 250 cc Honda motorcycle which I had left behind on my last visit to the island. Using that, we crossed the island. We drove to the top of the mountains and once on top, we turned around and we sailed silently down with the engine switched off. Our performances were to the audience's taste. She only sang three solo songs so I spent the rest of the evening solo. We got more and more requests. The Greeks were such a bunch of fun people. At one point, we played pretty much every night. The season had begun and we had to make a quick buck before the tourists went home. The majority of the work came down to me and Ma Anand, who saw my fatigue, always apologized that she did so little. However, I was insecure about the songs that I had written in India. I dared not sing them because I was afraid that the audience would walk out. We couldn't afford that because we were barely surviving. At one time, we played in five different hotels—the Hotel Plakia, the Bueno Hotel, the Hotel Lefkoniko, the Sandy Beach Hotel, and another. Every night, we came in our smoking and stinking car and I was ashamed of all those fancy people on the terrace when we had to unload our equipment.

We were looked at because we were the biggest attraction of the city. It was announced everywhere, "This evening, we will have live music and dancing with the famous duo from the Netherlands and France!" We had success, great success. However, my girlfriend felt burdened that she couldn't help enough and wanted to return to France. How could she do that? We were in the middle of the season and were fully booked until the end of September. Her panic attacks were so severe that at night, she often woke up screaming. I would drive her then to the airport which was about 120 kilometers back and forth. But every time, she changed her mind at the last minute. I think it happened five times and once we were home, it was as if nothing happened.

The bomb finally burst in early August. This time, she was really decided. She went to a travel agency and bought a plane ticket. Nothing I said or did could convince her to stay. The next day, I took her to the airport and on the way back, I stopped for a moment outside the airport. Through the gates, I saw the plane that would fly her to Paris. With a beating heart, I waited until she had gone on board. I can still hear her last words on the way to the airport. She spoke in English with that lovely French accent of hers, "Why should I go back? Why do I have to leave this paradise? Why do I have to be in an office?" I couldn't answer her. Once the plane had taken off, I realized that I was now alone. I had to perform in five hotels in the heart of the season while all our posters as duo were hung about. How was I to explain that she wasn't around anymore? I needed an excuse to hang. It wasn't easy because she had grown into a major attraction. It turned out to be a "mission impossible".

With a heart that wasn't happy, I no longer shone. I no longer sang to the stars of heaven. I was sad and angry about the fact that she had left me in the middle of the season. Well, that's show business. Every time I sang the song *Vaja con Dios*, tears shot in my eyes and the audience knew why I was crying. It was all too much. To make things worse, my car was failing me. It was already August and I longed for a break and to return to the Netherlands. I couldn't perform night after night anymore, I was just too tired and so alone.

67. ALONE ON SANTORINI

Suddenly, I couldn't stand against all those drunk and happy people. I began to count my pennies and calculate whether I had enough money for the boat ride to my beloved island of Santorini, and Nicos and Lula. I longed to write and make my recordings on the beach.

I canceled all my concerts. The hotel owners saw the sadness in my eyes and were full of understanding. Before I knew it, I was driving my car on board the ferry that was to take me to Santorini. Yes, once again I was overcome by the overwhelming purity and beauty of the island. I was home because it felt real. The last time, I had a beautiful camper with me. Every Greek who I passed had his mouth water because of it. Now, I drove my old Volkswagen diesel with a big black cloud of smoke behind me which I was embarrassed for dead.

My reception at Nicos and Lula's was no less hearty. With open hearts and arms, Nicos couldn't fail to express that I had to get a better car because it was very important. I soon found a spot on the beach. I left my car at Nicos' place so I could sleep overnight between the trees on the beach. At the crack of dawn, while the fishermen took to the sea, I started my recordings of the songs and poems which I had written in India several months before. With the sound of the sea in the background, the seagulls in the air, and the wonderful energy of this volcanic island, I sat there with my microphone in front of me, my textbook unfolded on the black sand, and my Ovation guitar in my hand. It seemed like the entire beach, the waves, and the sea sang along. Sometimes, I even thought the fishermen could hear me at sea. "Oh, life is good," I thought. One song after another, I succeeded on the beach of Perissa. However, I couldn't stay long on the island.

After the disappointing experiences in Crete, this short stay on Santorini did me good. It was now September and the season came to an end. It was time to return to the Netherlands. For the umpteenth time, I gave a sad farewell to Lula, Nicos, and my beloved island. I fell in love with my island because it was where I felt like a king even without a penny in my pocket. It was where I sipped the wine Nicos' father had made which made my lips tingle. It was where the small tomatoes, cucumbers, and grapes purified my blood and always gave me new energy.

It was where the hazelnuts, walnuts, and figs were part of everyday life. I wondered, “Why should I go? Am I not home yet? Am I not ready?” My heart pounded. It said, “Go, go, go!” Again, I sought the path of death—to die, to let go, to say goodbye. However, I knew I had to move as my odyssey was not over yet. Nobody wanted to leave his paradise but still, it happened. So, I left with a smoky wagon loaded with amplifiers, speakers, and guitars and left for the Netherlands. Goodbye island, the sea, Lulu, and Nicos. Thank you for all the times that I could eat with you when you got off work. Thanks for the wisdom you shared with me. You’re the best Greeks I’ve ever met. I admire your love for people even if they pressed dirty cigarette butts in a bowl with nuts or cucumber which you had prepared with love.

68. BACK TO VLISSINGEN

With a beating heart, I drove my car down the steep mountain road. Early the next morning, I took the boat that would take me to the mainland. Then, I drove towards Yugoslavia. However, I was doubtful if my car would handle it. The port of Piraeus was about 300 kilometers to the border. At such a time I thought, “Oh, I wish I just stayed home.” However, it’s a beautiful and surprising life. It constantly goes where you go or what you do. Everything passes. On the way to the border, I had to buy 5 liters of oil. Smoking and spluttering, I reached the border. At the border, the engine no longer wanted to start and I even had to be pushed over the border by the customs officials. I let out a big sigh of relief. I had made it.

With some work, my white Golf eventually stammered and spluttered into motion. With a large trail of smoke behind me, I continued my journey towards Holland with the misgiving that I maybe couldn’t get there. In Macedonia, about 200 kilometers inland, the engine said, “Do it yourself.” In this perilous path I had called upon God for help many times, but this time I saw that I needed more help. I was somewhere in a meadow along the infamous route with a wagon full of equipment. There was salvation. Someone from the village turned up. This man was willing to tow my car to his house and see what had to be done with it. Everyone in a country like Macedonia had a car. The news wasn’t good.

The car couldn't be immediately fixed. The parts were not available and if he got the parts, I couldn't pay for them. Meanwhile, I was introduced to the whole family and all his friends and acquaintances. Also, I was taken to the village pub. I let them hear my voice on a cassette tape. It made such an impression that I was embarrassed. I was dragged to sing on stage. It flashed through my mind to stay and sing here. However, a voice inside me said, "No, go all the way back to the Netherlands." I counted my pennies. I just had enough money for a train ride to the Netherlands. I gave away my car for demolition. I just had a suitcase and my Ovation guitar. When the train finally came, I boarded it and waved heartily.

Oh, life is to be lived and I have always done so. I have always enjoyed life. I was not looking for danger nor did I go out of its way. On the train, I sat between all Yugoslavs who were on their way to work in the factory. They were people who thought of nothing but laugh. With clenched buttocks—for I feared that my last possessions would be stolen—I continued my journey with an occasional vague smile at the people around me. In Belgrade I had to change trains, so that meant waiting a bit. I didn't mind. It was actually pretty fun. So much was happening on that platform. A special kind of mystical atmosphere hung over it like everyone was homeless and was looking for a home. I was not a man of 9 to 5 and that I would never be. It would make me sick. I knew more people who were so like me and usually, I found them the most compelling, inspiring people. Now, I was on my way again to that world of 9 to 5 where I didn't belong. It took a day before I arrived in Vlissingen.

I had been six months away and now I went back to square one. Something had changed in me. The death of Osho had put me off. Sometimes, the earth trembled under my feet. However, it wasn't the earth that trembled. It was me who was trembling with energy. In addition, I was constantly dying. I kept hearing a voice inside me that said, "When you're 54, you're dead." Nothing, absolutely nothing, could make me change my mind. I was now 48 years old. I had six more years to go, I figured out quickly.

The thundering sound of the train gave me peace. I had nowhere to go because I never saw a horizon or a destination looming in the distance. The trip itself was enough; the trip itself was the target. My flight was the flight of a bird in the air. "Follow your footsteps," someone once said to me. Indeed, I ran after my own footsteps. The smell of the dust on the road always opened wide my nostrils. I enjoyed traveling. With open arms, you must receive whatever comes your way and give without thought, trusting in the power of existence. It is something you can only experience when you do it. In any case, it happened to me. I let go of everything. You should let go in order to proceed to the next step. If you want to go to the light, then you will have to leave the darkness. Jesus said that himself, "Lord, save me!" I as a kid prayed, "Save me, Lord, from every evil. Amen." Yes, I tried to redeem myself. I was even willing to die. At least it was better than to give up and commit suicide. All of it felt like suicide. It was the suicide of the ego. I had to travel until my heart would say, "Enough is enough. Now, you can come home." By letting go of everything, you come home. At the time we die, we all have to let go whether we like it or not. It happens to everyone. We hold on to so many unnecessary things. Life is a big passion until the day that we all have to leave. We walk bent just like Jesus with the cross on his back. We crucify ourselves. Everyone has the ability to dance and jump like a child in the meadow, surrounded by beautiful flowers. As a child, I ran after the music and shouted, "Hey, wait for me!" I wanted to be where they danced, sang, and where everyone was happy.

I peered endlessly out the window of the train. Next to me was my suitcase and guitar. Slowly, the landscape changed and I recognized the familiar image of the country of butter, cheese, and eggs.

The door of the old house was wide open when I arrived in Vlissingen. I was received by the owner with open arms and immediately got a bed at my disposal. It soon turned out that everyone I knew had left the house except Betty. I was tired from the trip and for the first few days, I only slept. Slowly, I processed what I had experienced. Soon, my eyes were open again and I realized that time for navel gazing was over. I was back in the Netherlands, back in the world of 9 to 5, the tough world of work and money.

69. SEEFELD, AUSTRIA

I started to make some plans. It was early October. This time, I would go to Austria where I had sung in Seefeld which was 1500 meters high in the mountains. Therefor, I needed a car and a new sound system. I got a beautiful Ford station wagon that I bought from a farmer who had used it only for the transport of milk cans. Without snow chains, I headed towards the mountains. After some sliding by which my wagon hit a tree, I was welcomed with open arms in Seefeld. It was Christmas Eve. I was ready to go into the five-star Hotel Post where I had sung before. Since the hotel was fully booked, I slept in the bathroom of a small guesthouse in the neighborhood that first night.

Seefeld had many Italian tourists who always loved to listen to the songs of Frank Sinatra and other English-language cover songs. Because of the success, I dared to occasionally accompany myself on my guitar. There were also rich Germans and posh Dutch who came there for years. My loud singing wasn't always posh enough for them and they were demonstrative by putting cotton in their ears as they entered the dining room. Yet, the young owner and his wife asked me to continue. I found that I wasn't good at it. I got a look behind the scenes of the daily goings-on in a five-star hotel. The image was that of hardworking men and women, who were ready for their guests day and night. The owners had borrowed millions from the bank to build a business and just had to see how that millions could be recouped. On my travels, I often encountered beautiful people who gave me the chance to act. I also met a Dutch family. The father's name was Peter. He always offered me coffee and then said to his children who, according to him, were spoiled bitches, "Look, Luka is happy with nothing."

They came in a big BMW. One morning, he said to me, "Gosh, I can't use the car here." He added, "You have to do something with your money." I saw how he lived in a totally different world than mine. I needed every penny or drachma to survive and to trust that everything went well. Every night, I performed with increasing pleasure. I always paid much attention to my clothes but one evening, everyone looked at me and laughed. Under my beautiful suit, I appeared to have two

completely different socks. The laughter broke the ice and these kinds of jokes began to be a big part of my performances.

On my beautiful room with a large balcony, I started to write a lot of poems and songs. I was very happy. I occasionally took the train to Munich and walked the streets to the Marienplatz. Thus, the winter passed. The tourists left so the work also stopped. I could come back at Easter. I went back to the Netherlands in February. Along the way, I remembered what I had heard from the hotel staff, "Go to Switzerland. There, you'll earn twice as much." However, I felt that this was not the way at the time. It was a year ago that I had been in India and I still felt the effects of it. I often looked up at the sky and said spontaneously, "Hello, Osho." Again, I heard his voice in my heart which said, "Whenever you feel love, I will walk right beside you." For a moment, I indeed felt like a "singer of light". Aside from the daily concerns like money and shelter, life was good. It was actually very good compared to anything I had experienced before. I knew I had to follow my heart because otherwise, I would get sick. No matter how high the price was, I would have to pay for it. Sometimes, it seemed as if I was a bottomless pit and a voice inside me said, "Jump!" It was that feeling I had in Seefeld for a few times. After the enormous fear would be the beauty and silence. In that silence, a poem or a song naturally flowed again. I heard a voice inside that cried to me kindly, "Good morning, rose flower," and I woke up again.

70. RETURN TO VLISSINGEN

Back in Vlissingen, it was now the middle of winter. It was cold and things weren't so comfortable in the old house. Fortunately, I heard that for little money, you could rent a vacation home not far from the city. There was only one drawback—you could only stay until the end of May until the tourists came back. By then, they could ask for as much as four times the rent. So, in that short time I stayed in nature among the trees, plants, birds, and animals. The sea was never far away and on my Solex moped, which I had bought dirt cheap, I drove through the flat land. Occasionally, Betty came along and slept there. she wanted to be with her children. Meanwhile, I continued to write, sing, and I did gigs. I also had a three-hour interview on Radio New Zealand, where I sang

12 songs live. I really felt like an artist. Another music group only had five minutes' airtime to promote their CD. I had three hours! I felt that I could do what I did and that was good for my confidence. I remember an open-air gig at a festival in a square. The organizer came to me and said, "I'll pay you first then you will sing better." It was something I had never experienced. There I was on stage in the pouring rain with my guitar. I sang my heart out. A jazz band liked my performance so much that it volunteered to accompany me. It was a new experience for me. They like me, also in the Netherlands!

The months passed quickly. I struggled. I felt it. On the highway, I couldn't find the speed. I lost grip of the road. When I quickly put the car on the side and got out, it was as if I had landed in seventh heaven. I had to continue my journey as it was not over yet. I wrote a little note to the social service of Vlissingen, "The bird has flown again." I was writing my book, "Good Morning Rose Flower". With all the angels on my shoulder, I left Vlissingen for Germany. Afterwards, I would head off to Switzerland.

71. LOCARNO—MURALTO—Ticino, Switzerland

It was now June. The destinations of Ticino, Locarno, and Ascona were places I had never been to. Again, I was worried about the rats at the border because of all the devices I had with me. Luckily, they just let me through. Probably they thought that I was a Dutch tourist who was on holiday. I drove through the beautiful Swiss countryside with its mountains, its sun, its beautiful roads, and one tunnel after another. Those tunnels oppressed me a bit especially the longest one, the Gotthard, with a length of 17 kilometers! The more I approached the Gotthard, the greater my fear was. Alas, the car went in the tunnel. Thousands of thoughts went through me. I didn't want to continue but I had to. There was no other way. Yes, I could turn around and go to Greece via Italy, but the road through Yugoslavia had become too dangerous. That wasn't an option. I gathered all my courage and jumped into the deep. With my beloved meditation music in the background, I started the journey through the tunnel. For me, the tunnel was equated with death. I drove as fast as I could because the faster I drove, the sooner I was through.

That seemed like a logical argument. The fear hit me mercilessly that I wanted to put the car on the side in the middle of the tunnel. Every time I hit the brakes, more people drove past me. I remember when I cried out, "Help me!" I forgot what I was taught in meditation and therapy. Like a drunk, I began to sway from side to side, prayed, and begged so that I could survive all this. At its peak, I suddenly saw the light at the end of the tunnel. Before I knew it, I was out of the tunnel. I quickly found a spot along the road to just to catch my breath. I had survived, that was true, but don't ask how. I said to myself that this should never happen again. It was too dangerous for me and also for others. Why did I fear the tunnel? Where did that anguish come from? I didn't have time to think about this. I had to move.

I continued on my way. Suddenly, I saw a sign towards Lugano and another sign for Locarno. Without thinking, I took the exit for Lugano but a little further, I stopped the car. Something inside told me that I wasn't on the right path. I turned around. I doubted myself. Did I have to go to Switzerland? Just the thought of that tunnel made me decide to drive on, but to Locarno. Once back on the road, I felt better. The vast landscape, the sun, the grass, and the flowers gave me peace. The car was running well. I was happy. Suddenly, I heard a line from my book that asked, "Rose flower, good morning. How are you today?" I replied loudly, "I'm well, thank you." My heart said, "Here you are." Full of admiration, I looked at the landscape. Before my eyes were Ticino, Ascona, and Muralto. What splendor. The air felt good. I soon found a place in a parking lot by the lake. There was a toilet and a water dispenser. Everything was cleaned nicely. There was even toilet paper provided. The site was surrounded by beautiful trees. There was a small patch of grass you could walk on into the water, which served as the beach. All this was within walking distance of Locarno where the hotels were. I had my car classified so that I could sleep in the back. Since I was alone, I could place my cooler nicely on the front seat and prepare my food and coffee there. Everything was good. Perfect. The Italians sounded like music to my ears. I was in love with Ticino. Here, I had my little home. Here, I was going to sing and continue writing my book. Amidst the beautiful capital villas, a Dutchman was here to sleep in his Ford station wagon.

He was a Dutchman with only a few guilders in his pocket who listened to the lapping of the water of the lake where the posh rich walked their dogs. If the dog did a poo, they pulled a plastic glove from a vending machine, picked it up, and put the poo with the glove neatly in the dedicated bin. It was really incredible to see. With some promotional leaflets and a portable tape recorder with a few cassettes, I set out to find work. I succeeded like I always have. Here life was good, I had no doubt. That feeling always gave me confidence.

I toured Muralto during the day. I had planned to look for another place to sleep for the night. However, early in the morning, I was back at my familiar spot with fresh pastries and Italian salami from the supermarket. I went to the toilet, cleaned and washed myself and brushed my teeth. I swam in the clear water of the lake. I found an old chair which I used to get a tan. Later in the day, many people came and greeted me kindly. Again, I heard the voice, "Here, it is good."

At that time, Locarno had a major film festival underway. It was very busy and I was equally convinced that I could sing somewhere there. Like a predator looking for prey, I wandered through the city, lurking in some large restaurant or hotel. I chose three or four where I got a good feeling. This time, I saw opportunities everywhere because they popped up along the promenade of restaurants and hotels. I found myself in a big hotel called La Palma, a five-star hotel, and asked for the manager. I introduced myself, sung a bit of *Strangers in the Night*, and pushed a leaflet in his hand. He said that I should come back the next day. With a beating heart, I left the hotel. The hotel manager turned out to be a young and dynamic Austrian. That day, I did nothing else than look at all the splendor, the beauty, and luxury. I soon learned that it was at Piazza Granda where you could get the most delicious Italian pizza. This was much more Italian—people talked with their hands and everyone danced and enjoyed life. Behind me lay the mountains through which the damn Gotthard Tunnel ran. Here, it was always a few degrees warmer because it was embraced by mountains. Everything had its price, I thought. If you want to see the world, you have to climb over hills. If you are afraid of heights, it is sometimes quite difficult. That afternoon,

I lounged on my old chair and looked over the lake. I picked up my pen and paper and began to write "Good Morning, Rose Flower." My heart burst open with happiness. The world was back at my feet. I had found a new home—Ticino.

The next day, I stepped confidently into the La Palma where I was told that I could perform every night in one of their restaurants which was located on the boulevard. The salary was good especially since it was paid in Swiss Francs which were worth about 40 percent more than Dutch guilders. My luck was rolling. Dancing, I walked back to my car which was my sleeping place, my house. In one of the cases I had a nice Cardin jacket and a cowboy hat which I would wear during my performances. Since I could leave my sound system in the hotel, I had more space in the car. Oh, life was good. I remember that people tried to discourage me from making this trip. My heart danced now. It was never my intention to become a great artist but to do what my heart told me to. My heart wanted to sing and write. Moreover, I was all convinced by Osho who had given me the name "singer of light".

At La Palma, I sang outside the restaurant every evening and in the background was a Venetian style building complete with a Romeo and Juliet balcony. While I sang, thousands of people walked past the boulevard. Every night, we danced on the famous evergreens to *Strangers in the Night* and *The Last Waltz* which I sang with the orchestra. Every night was a party. I was provided a meal and drinks. The drinks were mostly tea because I didn't drink alcohol. When I was offered a drink by the guests, I took one glass filled mostly with cold tea with a hint of whiskey. The prices of the drinks were so high. Around 1 am, the party was over. I parked my wagon at a quiet spot between the trees. Before I slept, I folded my clothes neatly and closed the curtains of the rear windows. Nobody knew that there slept an artist on a foam mattress. The best part was always the morning with its fresh clean air and the sound of birds that sang their song in the highest trees. There were also the fresh rolls from the bakery. After breakfast, I was ready to lie down on my recliner to feel the sun on my skin and write what came to my mind. If I wanted to, I took a walk by the lake. Sometimes, I was in Locarno to watch the street performers, clowns and singers.

One evening, my boss told the hotel manager that I slept in my car. He said he would ensure that I got a room in the hotel. I got a beautiful room with a balcony. Yet, I wasn't happy. I missed my place among the trees, the birds, and the fresh air. However, a big advantage was that I could just take a shower again. Albert, the manager, was very good to me. He gave me food to eat and the occasional ice cream. He also gave me the tip to dress as a cowboy as long as the film festival was ongoing. I wore my cowboy hat. My voice echoed from one wall to the other, on the streets, and the parks and squares across the water while the people laughed, danced, and amused themselves. Oh, what a show that was. The whole restaurant was filled with an incredible energy. Business went well and I started to sing more often. In the beginning, I would have a hoarse voice but that didn't spoil the fun. I was a cowboy, a Romeo, who had found a place to express myself. I had found a place where I, along with the hotel pianist from Italy, ate good meals. We just looked at each other and laughed because he spoke no English and I no Italian. For a moment, I felt like a king. Yes, I was "The King."

During one of my shows, I came into contact with a film producer named Hannes Stark. He was there because of the film festival. I noticed that he kept looking at me and was writing while I was singing. During the break, I stepped up to him and asked him what he was doing. He said he saw a film in me and that he was writing down a few ideas. I felt honored. I let him read my poems and writings and in exchange, he gave me a brochure of the film he was promoting. "Be careful with anything you have written," he told me. "The day will come when you will use them." He also told me to stay in touch with him. Who knows, we could make a movie together!

It was the beginning of September. Soon, the performances at La Palma came to an end. I also heard that the great director was fired. We both had to find something else. That last night, I was very well looked after. I got an extra large meal and for dessert, I was served a large bowl of ice cream with numerous flavors. It was too much for me so I shared it with the staff. It was a great party. The next day, I left my hotel room late. The balance was nicely settled and fortunately, it appeared to be

an affordable amount. From that point, I could literally go anywhere. Should I go to the Netherlands? Greece?

I decided to stay. I was confident that I could survive here. I slept in my wagon again, washed myself in the sink, and brushed my teeth with a bottle of water. At night, I listened to unexpected sounds and in the morning, I breathed in the fresh air of the lake. I thought it was fine. It still wasn't cold. The warmth of the season was hanging in the mountains. I enjoyed again the world around me, the delicious pizzas at Micro's Piazza Granda, and the friends I made. No, I didn't want to leave yet. After a few days of rest, I decided to sing on the streets because there was no other work now. Initially, I was afraid to do so but I heard you could make money from it, so that gave me courage. With a beating heart and my cowboy hat on, I sat down on the ground. It was as if the gods were with me because I hadn't opened my mouth yet and there was already a woman who threw five Swiss francs in my guitar case. "That's good," I thought, "that's really good." I started and kept singing. I saw that a pile of money began to form in my guitar case. After about two hours, I stopped, filled my pockets with the money and ran to the park to count my coins. To my surprise, it turned out to be more than 100 francs! I had found another way to survive. Unfortunately, it was not always smooth sailing. The next day, the police stood in front of me and asked for my license. I didn't have one so I had to go to the police station to pay a fine. Sometimes, my place was snapped up by some clown who needed to survive. Eventually, I earned just enough to survive and sometimes a little bit more. There were some nice moments when the au-pairs, with the children of rich parents, always stood still and let the kids dance. I enjoyed the joy of those little children. All in all, it was still a hard life because you were always dismissed and tossed around. Increasingly, I was told, "No, not for my bank...No, not for my shop...Where's your license...Where is your passport?" There also was, "Do not stay longer than three months. Otherwise, you will be asked to leave the country." Those three months were long gone but they couldn't see that because there was no stamp in my passport.

I became increasingly savvy. I soon learned which places in the city you could earn the most. Things became increasingly fierce. I was under

day and night surveillance by the police. I lived in the moment. I sat in the sun like a bum counting my money on a bench in the park. After I counted the money, I could go shopping again. I couldn't sing for a week due to a presidential visit. If that was the case, I moved to Belizona in Ancona. However, it didn't have a pleasant atmosphere and I was back in the city again. I tried everything. I was once asked to perform in a small theater but no one showed up.

I still had contact with Rose, a woman I had met in La Palma. She had a second-hand clothing shop somewhere in the middle of the city. She promised me she would talk to someone who had a large restaurant. She would try to arrange a contract for the entire winter season, but I didn't know what to say about that. By now, it was already October and it was getting pretty wet and cold. Sleeping in the car wasn't as much fun anymore. One day, my car was surrounded by three motorcycle officers and a police van. I had to show my passport and it scared me to death when the officer asked what my business was here. I then gave the address of a friend who lived in Belizona. When they left, the fear stayed with me. I moved places every night. One evening, when I was once parked somewhere between the trees, I was suddenly awakened by a strange noise. I opened the curtain of my back window and right before my eyes, I saw two people moaning and making a seesaw on a rug they had spread on the ground. They spent the night in the open. I saw the amazement on their faces when I started my car to pick up some fresh sandwiches at the bakery.

During the day, I often went singing in the city, especially at Rose's shop. On a day when the weather wasn't too good, Rose told me she had found a cheap room in a guest house within walking distance of Locarno. It proved to be a big room where I could cook. The owner had an understanding for musicians and kept the rent very low. I continued to sing so I could just pay the rent. The room had a great view of the lake and there was even a balcony where I could sit and eat. The bed I shared occasionally with Secondhand Rose. She also provided me with new costumes which she had bought for next to nothing. I would wear them if I got to work at her friend's restaurant called San Pedro in Ancona in the winter.

The night I was there for an audition, something wonderful happened. I noticed that my voice had a certain tone and strength I hadn't had for a long time. The owner himself was not present but his wife Marja was. In the beginning, there were only a few people around the bar but later that night, it was packed and there were no more places to sit or even stand. There was a kind of ecstasy, an excitement that was hard to describe. Suddenly, a man came right in front of me, a man who looked exactly like me. He looked me deep into my eyes and said, "I'm Eddy, the owner. Come with me." Because of the crowd, we made our way out and went to another nightclub. There, he told me that I could do my shows all winter for about three times a week, with a salary that could easily pay the rent and I could survive on. So, I was to sing in the San Pedro. The evenings I always started with my own songs on the guitar and then continued with the familiar hits with an orchestra-tape. Each performance lasted five hours with breaks in between. During the breaks, I would have a free drink and a hot meal that was prepared by Eddy himself. It was confusing that Eddy and I were so similar. People often thought we were brothers. The restaurant was in a shopping mall, making my voice echo through its roofs and walls. Because there was nothing to do in the evening as it was winter, my voice attracted the people on the street who were looking for some fun and entertainment. I began to love the couple, the place, and the people. It was pandemonium every night. In the best sense of the word, it was a kind of spiritual club. In any case, it was a wonder how I had gotten there. The audience consisted mainly of wealthy people who were not afraid to spend money. Very often, I received an envelope with a number of my beloved Swiss banknotes in it. Also, I was often offered drinks but I didn't drink alcohol. One time, I tried a touch of whiskey but my body refused and I was sick to my stomach. I stayed with regular Coke. I also didn't drink because I still had to sing. By singing week after week, I got to know the audience and I saw how many guests there were lonely and hopeless alcoholics. I met Henry Hunter from Germany. Sometimes, he hit his fist on the bar and said, "Listen to that man. That's a poet." Sometimes, he even cried when I sang his song request, *Yesterday* by the Beatles. Yes, there was heavy drinking going on and occasionally we heard a bang, when someone had slipped on his way to the toilet.

Rose also was present almost every night and sat staring with the proud look in her eyes. Meanwhile, I continued writing my book and I wrote some songs for it. Eddy heard them and asked if I wanted to write a song for him which I did with pleasure. It was a beautiful song titled *You Are My Brother*. Yes, I was very creative at that time because I had enough mental and physical inspiration.

One of the regulars was a fat woman who told me that she had inherited 350 million francs. She was filthy rich but unhappy. One night, she couldn't eat because she had lost 30 million at the stock exchange that day. I didn't understand why she was so angry because she still had 320 million left. Very often, she came with her Italian boyfriend who turned out to be construction worker and not a bad singer. He often asked if he could sing and I gave him the microphone. While he sang, I looked into the eyes of the unhappy woman and wanted to ask her, "Give me a million because I have a dream. I want to build a village in Greece. It is a village for the poor and homeless." I just couldn't get it out of my mouth. When he had finished singing, they stood up and placed 10 francs in my hand. Maybe it was too early to start on my dream. The idea gnawed at me and at that moment, I saw a possibility of achieving my dream with the help of the rich woman.

Another guest that caught my attention was a Dutchman who was well-known by the police and for some unknown reason, was protected by the state. When he was drunk, he got loose. For example, he once told me how much hash he had transported by boat and that his story had been in the weekly Panorama. Another time, he came on crutches and had a broken nose.

On my repertoire, I had a lot of my original songs. Many of them I had written during my stay in India. When I sang those songs, the audience came under the influence of the special atmosphere that emanated from those songs. Also, the song that I had written for the boss Eddy, *You Are My Brother*, was often requested. There was even a record executive who promised to make a single of it after his honeymoon. He probably had other things on his mind and he completely forgot about the appointment because I never heard from him. Despite my success, I

was unsure if I sang my songs well. The uncertainty was definitely in my guitar playing.

We experienced lots of rain interspersed with periods of sunshine. Occasionally, there were days when you could sit down with a delicious pizza on a terrace. It was almost Christmas. Every evening, San Pedro was filled with regular customers. They were a kind of fan club. Every night was a party and I ended up singing on a chair or table. One evening, I heard that the famous fiddler Zacharias was coming. When he came in the door, I was suddenly so insecure that I quickly switched from my own songs to the well-known songs. During the break, he came to me and said, "What you did just now was nice. That was real." I looked at him astonished and said, "Are you serious?" Then, he grabbed me by my jacket and said angrily, "I never lie to anyone, fool!" I remember that moment clearly. It touched me deeply that a man gave his honest opinion about my songs.

Christmas and New Year was celebrated with a lot of champagne. Also, the food that Eddy prepared on those days was even better than usual. Customers sometimes asked if I wanted a bottle of champagne when a bottle cost hundreds of guilders. It was good that Eddy couldn't read my mind because I always secretly thought, "Give it to me but I prefer money." I didn't complain. I was able to survive the winter so that was quite something. The tourist season in Greece was just around the corner.

Rose, who was almost at the bar every night, got drunk so often that she could hardly walk. I also found out that she dealt with shady characters. Eddy told me that her last boyfriend was murdered in an alley not far from San Pedro. One night, when she slept with me, I suddenly woke up because I felt a tremendous aggression coming towards me. I didn't know where it came from. Was it her or something else? I quickly closed my eyes and looked at the first image that came to mind. It was the image of a doll that I got from the closet. I saw the image of a knife on the table. I jumped out of bed, grabbed the knife and the doll, ran outside, and threw the doll in a trash can somewhere far away. I went back home, where Rose was sleeping because she drank a lot that night. The next day, I called my ex-wife and told her that I was surrounded

by black power, the same black energy I experienced just before Osho's death in Poona. She reassured me by saying that this was part of my journey to enlightenment. Another time, I came in contact with that black magic. A friend of Eddy's was reading a book when I entered the San Pedro. I walked up to her and saw that she was reading a book about witches and symbols. I just started reading and suddenly, I got this image of a triangle that I had to go through. I suddenly became so scared that I ran out to catch my breath. There were nights when the guests knelt in a circle with burning candles around me. I found it scary. It reminded me of Osho who cried every time he felt negativity around him. I wanted nothing to do with it and broke my ties with Rose. The break gave me some air and a renewed sense of purity. I enjoyed the miracle of Ticino again with its beautiful river and large boulders where the water was so clear and powerful. In that picture, I saw myself. Also, I was on my way to who I really was. The feeling of dying at 54 years of age kept coming back but along the way, I thought that it was just a stupid idea of mine.

Meanwhile, I had met another woman, Charlotte, who came to listen to me night after night. She came from Zurich and was on vacation for several weeks. She was of Jewish origin, was my age, and had bright red hair. She also loved a drink but never took too much. She was adorned with jewels and had the necessary gold credit cards which she happily flashed. She was sweet and a little nervous. At least she was a great improvement after Rose the drunk. It so happened that Eddy had the keys to a penthouse at the top of the mountains until it was sold. He gave me the keys. Along with Charlotte, I went there. I suddenly felt like a millionaire without millions. High in the mountains, I stayed with my new love and with the snow-white paradise which was surrounded by birds that whistled cheerfully. Oh, life was still wonderful.

However, everything passed by, like staying in the luxurious penthouse and the performances in San Pedro. It was February. I left with my new girlfriend for Zurich where she lived and worked. She had an apartment and I moved in with her. Our relationship was now so close that we made plans to leave everything behind and move to Crete to start a new life. For her, it was an important and difficult step. She had to let go of everything. She did it. She quit her job and sold all of her belongings.

Just when we were about to fly to Greece, she received the news that her son was arrested for drug trafficking. It was to my surprise that Charlotte had a son. He turned out to be a pimp. Soon, we took the money that he possessed to safety before the police found out. I wanted to have absolutely nothing to do with this. The tensions that arose from this situation put our relationship under pressure. We couldn't blow off our whole plan because we were too far in it. The last piece of furniture was sold and the lease was terminated. It was now April. We bought a new car and loaded it with clothes and music equipment. This car was transported by boat to Crete while we went by plane.

72. WITH CHARLOTTE TO CRETE, GREECE (4)

We left with mixed feelings because her son had to appear in court. There was no way back. Once we were in Crete, we left everything behind. After a week, everything became an illusion. We kept fighting and Charlotte was rightly concerned about her son. She couldn't get used to the country and the mentality of the Greeks altogether. She found Greece dirty and dingy and that women were not treated with respect. There, she was right on. The Venus Apartment, where I had stayed on a previous trip, wasn't good enough for her. One day, she ran away. I immediately organized a search. I looked everywhere but I couldn't find her. I was desperate. The secretary who worked at the apartment complex showed her emotions about the whole situation. After several phone calls, they found out that my girlfriend was hanging around in some five-star bar. I found her at the bar with her gold and diamond rings on her fingers. She was drunk. She told me she didn't want to stay in Greece. She suggested for us to go to Italy, buy a house, and continue our lives there. I just started to feel at home and had performances in Lefkoniko plus many other performances for the whole season in the offing! It became clear that Italy was not an option for me at the moment, so we decided to try Crete again. We rented a large villa, Villa Olga, which was somewhere in the mountains not far from Rethymno. Although the villa was secluded, it was reachable by car or motorcycle. However, we were stranded in quarrels and with all her suitcases, she went to Italy by boat. I was left in the villa in the mountains without a penny in my pocket. From now on,

I only had to refurbish and that meant a lot of work. Instead of a car, I bought a motorcycle. That was tough but it was also nice. The question was how to transport a complete PA system on such a thing? I often had to hire a taxi to carry the stuff. Fortunately, I was booked in hotels which already had a PA system so I didn't have any problems.

73. DAGMAR

Occasionally, I went along with this young lady from Germany who worked at the front desk of Venus and knew of my situation. Her name was Dagmar. She always showed great understanding. Often, she sat staring at me with a dreamy look in her eyes. It was as if she was secretly in love with me. She was 20 years younger. She was in Crete to try to sell units of the Venus Apartment. She was particularly good, so good in fact that she deserved more than the owners of the Venus apartment complex. There were Greek owners who were not happy with it. She also showed no interest in the advances of the Greek men. This created friction and discord. Eventually, she was terminated and had to leave her office. She was without a job and a home.

Dagmar and I saw each other more often and she regularly came to my gigs. Often, we rode around on my bike and ate together somewhere. I tried to help her find a suitable home for her but we found nothing. The villa in the mountains had some empty rooms. I offered her my room for free on the condition that she shared it with me. She thought it was a good idea. We bought a moped for her so she could go wherever she wanted. She was a young, attractive woman and soon, we got along very well. Before we knew it, we ended up in seventh heaven. Day after day, week after week, I sang in the hotels and after each performance, I quickly drove back home to my villa in the mountains where I, along with my new girlfriend, experienced thrilling pleasure and ecstasy. During my days off, we rode along the island. Life was one big party. The money flowed in and my heart sang like never before. Each night, I drew full houses. We both had fallen in love with this island, this place, and the people noticed that. Every evening, chairs were dragged on the terrace of the Flisvos Hotel. Everyone on the island knew that Flisvos was the place to be. The other hotel owners came to see what was going on. Yes, I was

on fire with a burning heart to sing. They called me “Mister Thousand Volts”. It felt as if a bomb had burst. All the energy that I had gained in India proved to discharge here in a big explosion of love. It looked like a circle of light in which people were drawn to like a magnet. While I was singing, I felt my mala in my back pocket. “Thank you, Osho,” I whispered then. “Thank you.” With Angela, who sat at the organ, I sang *Moon River*. The stars danced on the waves of the sea. Afterwards, Dagmar and I walked on the beach. We held hands while looking at the sea and the moon. The next day, I had the same energy, the same ecstasy. Life was a dream for us and the audience took that energy home. I had entered the world and now, the world came to me. Every night, I sang with conviction, “*I did it my way.*”

Not only were the shows a success, the tapes for sale weren’t dragging. To celebrate our success, we went for a week’s holiday at my beloved island of Santorini. The hotel owners didn’t like that but my voice also needed a break. That, they understood. That vacation was a kind of honeymoon for us. After that week, I quickly went back to work, night after night. The year passed quickly.

74. DANIEL

When the season came to an end and the performances were over, we stayed for a few months in Crete. Then, we flew to Darmstadt in Germany where her parents lived. Her father watched me critically but didn’t disapprove of our relationship. Her mother even put candles everywhere as a sign of love. Yeah, I was twenty years older and it took some getting used to her parents, but her parents didn’t notice. I felt quickly at home. After having stayed a few weeks at the home of her parents, we went to her apartment. It soon became clear that we weren’t allowed to live there together so we had to look for another house. Luckily, we found one in Wasserburg, not far from Lake Bodensee. It was a nice romantic place for the winter. Dagmar’s biological clock had started ticking. She was approaching her thirties. She wanted a child and I welcomed the thought. Dagmar soon became pregnant. We, including her parents, were overjoyed because they didn’t have any grandchildren. They arranged a permanent home for us at Omstad. I wanted to go on

tour again. In the Wasserburg area, I didn't succeed. Only at Christmas did I get some gigs, nothing further. I hoped it would be better in Darmstadt and Omstad.

Her father was now working to install a new kitchen and new carpet for our house. He kept himself busy in our house. Maybe it was because he had two daughters and we had told him that it would be a boy. He had always wanted a son. With all the well-intentioned care and financial support, I started to feel uncomfortable. I felt embarrassed and missed my freedom, my independence. I suggested moving to the Netherlands but that wasn't feasible. We decided that only I would go to the Netherlands. Provisionally, I found a room in a monastery near Maastricht, on the border of Germany. One time, she came to me. The other times, I came to her until she was too pregnant to travel. The distance between us grew unnoticed. There were daily clashes which were exacerbated by her pregnancy. However, I didn't let her down and felt responsible for my own son. We continued to see each other.

The tension continued to increase not only between us but also between her parents who were also separating. Her mother purchased a house. It was already August, the peak season in Crete, and I wasn't there because our child could be born any moment. I left the Netherlands and moved in with Dagmar. Meanwhile, I suffered from anguish. I had one attack after another. Everything happened at the same time—the fights, the separation of her parents, and having no work. My relationship with her father came under pressure. I learned more about him. For him, the only one thing was money because money is power. Thank God I finally found work in an Italian restaurant not far from our house. That way, I contributed to the cost of living but it wasn't much. Eventually, the situation was too much to handle and I wanted to get away from that nonsense, hatred, aggression, and frustration. Everything that happened in Crete was totally gone. Love seemed further away than ever. Never had I met people with such closed hearts.

When the contractions started, I raced Dagmar to the hospital in Darmstadt where she was admitted immediately. Everything turned out fine, so the only thing we had to do was wait. Day after day, we waited to no avail. The doctors wanted the child to be born naturally so she got a

pill, another infusion, she climbed the stairs, but nothing helped. The pain threshold on the meter had no effect on her. The nurse was distraught. She asked, "Do you feel anything?" Dagmar didn't feel anything. This was typical of her. Weeks passed. Sunflowers, which I picked everyday for her, had now become a big bouquet. Still, there was no child. When her mother and sister visited her, I just burst into tears. Suddenly, I got this image of a woman who could not let go. She wouldn't survive her ordeal. It was as if I knew what was going to happen. I realized that this could only lead to death. The image was immediately dismissed as absurd, but for me it was reality. From that moment, I stared at her face and I chased her everywhere. Once, I followed her to the bathroom where I had to lift her because she had fainted. I expressed my concern and anxiety to the doctors on duty, but they hardly responded and put off the incident as something normal. After 10 days, she went really crazy and Dagmar got a huge dose of medication to induce labor. The person who administered it was a Polish nurse who had a vicious look in her eyes. I'm not a doctor, but something didn't feel right. For a moment, I went to the toilet and when I came back, Dagmar was shivering and shaking like she was suffering from convulsions. Her eyes rolled around strangely and for me, this could only mean one thing—she was dying. I screamed for a doctor but no one came. I then ran down the hallway and cried out again, "Doctor!" I ran around the corridor until I came to the canteen where I saw doctors drinking coffee. With tears in my eyes, I screamed in my best German that something bad was going on with Dagmar and that they should come immediately. They should have seen that I was serious because the whole group stood up and ran after me. In her room, I stood at a distance while I watched those 4 to 5 doctors work on her. It looked like a matter of life and death.

Another injection was administered to calm her down. She was quickly brought to the Caesarean section. I saw that she had lost her consciousness and her body came to rest again when the elevator doors closed. I called her parents who lived near the hospital. They came right away and could barely be present at the birth of their grandchild and my son which was on August 2, 1993, at full moon. The baby was placed on a table in front of me and I was asked to cut the umbilical cord, which

I found quite scary. It was a healthy and beautiful baby. The baby was washed and dressed. The doctor came in and told me that everything had gone well and that the mother and child are alright. Spontaneously, I hugged and kissed her. Thank God everything was still good. I was ecstatic and danced through the halls, not knowing that Dagmar was still under anesthesia in the intensive care unit at that time. All the attention was focused on the baby. When I held the baby in my arms, I felt intoxicated with happiness. I couldn't go in the intensive care unit. The room was dark and I didn't know where Dagmar was. I stepped inside. A nurse tried to stop me but I screamed, "Let me through! I'm a therapist." Overwhelmed by my action, the nurse brought me to the bed where Dagmar was. In the semi-darkness, I saw the mother of my child. Although she was still under anesthesia, I whispered with big tears in my eyes, "Dagmar, all is well." I put the baby down next to her against her face. Immediately, she opened her eyes and her beautiful smile appeared on her face. "Everything went well," I stuttered in my best German. At that time, I knew that my job was over. With the baby in my arms, I left the department while Dagmar closed her eyes again. Her parents, who still stood waiting in the hallway, held the baby in their arms for the first time. Her father was quite possessive as he held it as if it was his baby. We brought the baby back to the maternity ward. Oh, I was delighted and proud that I was able to experience this. That same night, her parents invited me out for a celebratory dinner. It was a warm summer evening with a full moon. The food tasted so good.

The next morning, with a large sunflower I had picked along the way, I proudly walked to the hospital. When I arrived at the intensive care unit, they told me that Dagmar had been brought back to her room. Semi-conscious, Dagmar was put in a wheelchair and was being brought by a nurse to the elevator. I ran after them. I tried to talk to her but she didn't seem to hear me. Everything felt so unloving and heartless that her room looked like a prison camp. Dagmar was in a room with three other women, all of whom had just given birth to a child. The intention was that Dagmar could unwind there and then go home after a few days. However, she got a nasty infection so she had to stay in the hospital longer than planned. As often as I could, I brought her sunflowers.

Despite the inflammation, she was pleased and happy that our baby was healthy. It soon became clear that Dagmar had other plans for the baby. Without consulting sides, she decided to name the baby after her father. I had to sign a document that I was the father. So, my suspicions were true. I was known as the biological father but her father had a son.

She had gotten what she wanted. More and more I was kept out of things. They didn't involve me in the daily care of the child. Yes, I was allowed to take him for a walk and sing a few songs for him. I can still hear her say, "This birth, this child is the only thing in my life I can say is really mine." From that time, it was clear—she was the boss. She had it all planned in advance and carried it out step by step. This was confirmed by the many newspaper clippings about unmarried women in motherhood that I found in her apartment.

Meanwhile, spring had just arrived. That whole winter, I sang a few times a week in the Italian restaurant. It didn't yield much and nothing came my way. I didn't know what to do. On one hand, it was obvious that I couldn't earn a living. However, I also didn't want to leave Dagmar and the child. That's why I stayed six months with her and I helped her as much as possible with everyday things. One day, Dagmar and her mother blandly told me that I could take my luggage and leave. Now it was done, over and out. With a heart full of inconsolable tears, I said goodbye to my son.

75. CRETE, GREECE (5)

So, I left by plane to Crete. From the little money I had, I rented a motorbike and a small apartment. I lived on nothing until the first shows came in. Because of the success the year before, the season was happily booked quickly. My heart was crying. Before my departure from Germany, Dagmar had promised me that she would come to Greece in early summer with our son. That gave me back a little courage. I quietly started to dream that they might remain forever. If that were so, then there had to be money coming in soon. So, I started working like crazy on that assumption. Soon, I worked at least six nights a week and the money poured in even though it was still pre-season. I wanted to show Dagmar that I could take care of her and our child. If they could give her

a job in the tourist industry, we would succeed. I rented a dream villa on top of a mountain overlooking the sea. The rent was affordable. I saw it all—this would be our permanent home.

I immediately began decorating the nursery and bedroom. From everywhere, I took furniture and old stuff. If it was broken or too old, I snapped it up and gave it a nice restoration. Because the cars in Greece were expensive, especially on the islands, I bought a very old Ford. All in all, I had a house, a motorcycle, and a car. The work went well, very well indeed. I got offered so many performances that I had to cancel some of them. The hotel owners came to me and said, “Luka, sing for us.” I just laughed because I had to be careful with whom to do business. Some hotel bosses paid close to nothing or too little. I worked for Lefkoniko, a big boss from Cyprus who, together with his sons, ran several major hotels on the island. It was said that he had 1500 beds altogether which were mainly occupied by Danes, Swedes, and Finns. That was exactly my audience. Those guys were always very excited and danced and sang along especially if they had drunk a lot. Later on, I learned of a Dutch singer in Sweden. His name was Cornelis Vreeswijk and he was very popular at that time. Meanwhile, I counted the days. Dagmar would soon arrive with our child for what she said as “a vacation of a few weeks” but I hoped for more, much more. However, I was told that her father would follow a few days later. I booked a room for him in a big hotel.

I was still living in a dream world. I was where I wanted to be with the sun and the sea. I thought of the earlier times when I sat staring through the windows of a large hotel at the band that was playing. Now, I was in one of the largest hotels on the island every night. For Greek standards, I earned well compared to the Greeks who didn’t work or earned only a fifth of what I made. I worked hard to earn as much as I could because I didn’t want to hear from Dagmar that I couldn’t care for her and our child. With love, I refurbished a playpen, polished an old pram, and painted a bed. I wanted the prince to be rich like me. After my gigs, I drove up the mountain, opened the front door, took my shoes off, and on the cool white marble, I went barefoot from one room to another. By the window was a large antique table with a candle on it. The kitchen was equipped with a microwave and refrigerator. Everything was ready

to receive Dagmar and our child. The day of their arrival came. In my old Ford, I headed to the airport. I immensely looked forward to the reunion and dreamed of the possibility that they would stay with forever. I had already prepared everything. I found that Dagmar could work as a receptionist or as a nanny at the English school on the island. I saw that other foreigners had also built their lives on Crete, so why couldn't we? Everyone knew that my wife and child were arriving and wondered how they looked. It was early in the season. The flowers were in bloom. Everything seemed perfectly arranged. For a moment, I thought back to the day I got the keys to the house. Suddenly, a beautiful rainbow appeared over the house and ended up somewhere in the sea. This was no coincidence, I thought. Was this a sign? I remember that I stood there with tears of emotion and said to myself, "This, I never want to lose!"

In my old rickety car, I drove to the airport. The big moment had arrived. I was finally going to see my child who was now ten months old now. The reunion was very emotional for me. He was a wonderfully beautiful child. He turned out to have a smiley face. Still unsure what anyone was talking about, he smiled kindly as if he was able to understand what we were saying. He had Dagmar's blond hair and big, round eyes. We drove to our house that I had decorated and prepared with much love and attention. I was happy and a bit proud that I was able to do this. Initially, Dagmar was overjoyed but she said that I should realize that they weren't staying even though I knew her heart longed for Crete. At first, I paid no attention to that comment. I thought she needed to acclimatize and get used to the new situation. I thought everything would change but it didn't. When we went to fetch her father from the airport, he dropped his note with his big mouth, "Yes, this is nice for the holidays. Just stay here a few weeks and nothing more."

Dagmar's father increasingly asserted his German authority. Dagmar spent more time at his hotel than in our home. I was angry and sad because in their eyes, they saw nothing of what I was doing and what I had done. When I told her that one of Lefkoniki's hotels had work for her, she would have none of it. It was clear that she had her own agenda which she kept hidden from me. Her behavior became incomprehensible and I was blind. Her father said that nothing was good enough. It led

to a veritable power struggle between her father and me. He was an unyielding businessman with a cold heart, a man who knew exactly how to belittle people and be proud of it. He had his daughter completely gripped by money and power. That fierce side had perhaps brought him wealth, but it was also the reason his wife had divorced him. It was an unequal struggle, a struggle that I could never win. It was two against one, or perhaps three to one. The first few days, we had fun. I proudly showed my girlfriend and my son the hotels where I worked. Everyone we met responded warmly and enthusiastically. Soon, our life together was hell. This battle stayed in my heart and I suffered deeply. There were large, daily quarrels. The aggression they had finally wrecked me. Both constantly fired at me. I eventually let them win and I agreed that Dagmar would stay with our child at a hotel for the rest of her stay in Crete. Her departure touched me in my innermost being. I saw my child being taken away from me. I was distraught. What did I do to deserve this? Was it true that people couldn't handle too much love? Here, I stood with outstretched arms and an open heart waiting for them. However, everything was thrown back in my face. How could anyone be so cruel, so inhuman?

After they left the house, I found my beautiful silk gown and slashed it to pieces with a knife. It scared me because I knew Dagmar was a judoka and had a black belt. Occasionally, she could be violent. Where did that anger and aggression come from? Walking through the house, I saw that she had left her credit card. With the greatest difficulty, I decided to bring it to her. When I arrived at her hotel, I found her sitting on the beach next to her father with the small one playing in the sand. I walked silently towards her and placed the credit card on her lap and said that she had forgotten it. Quickly, I turned away so as not to show my tears. That same evening, I had a gig in Crete Star. "The show must go on," as they would say. I had to move on with my life because the car was expensive and the rent had to be paid. That night, hundreds of people, with burning cigarette lighters in the air, sang a song which had become a kind of trademark of mine, *You'll Never Walk Alone*. This time, I had to restrain my tears because I felt lonelier than ever.

I thought, “When you walk through a storm, hold your head up high.” And I did. I kept my head up high with my eyes on the stars. Jesus, Buddha, Osho, and Krishna were there. That night, I felt a terrible pain in my heart. I sang mainly for upscale German guests and these weren’t the easiest guests to please. This time, there were a number of them who complained that the music was too loud. It didn’t affect me. I held my head up high. I had no choice, I had to. During the day, I stared at the sea alone in my nice, big house. Somewhere in the distance, Dagmar was with her father and the little one. I was afraid because I often heard that after the birth of her child, a woman ended up in a deep depression and did weird things. I felt cheated but still played the victim. I tried to find the cause of it all. I was able to look at myself from a distance, like someone who was able to look at himself while undergoing surgery. However, I noticed that the moments of light, understanding, and consciousness became frequent. Whatever I did and whether I went on the right path or deviated from it, the road continued. Any diversion or error is part of the road. On our way, we pass through the light and darkness, through heaven and hell. The school of life is a big theater. Shakespeare said, “Life is but a shadow.” In fact, he says the same—the road is the source of everything. There is no other way. When you come home, you will find that you are in everything and that everything is in you.

While I was still on the mountain without a wife and child in my big house, I heard that Dagmar was flying back to Germany with the little one soon. My friends began to grumble about how this German woman treated me. The Greeks didn’t like the Germans, only their D-marks. The Greeks believed that the honor of a man was sacred and disagreements were resolved with revenge. I thought of abducting the child and teach her father a lesson. Sometimes, I was terrified of the thought. I realized how dangerous the situation had become. On the island, I was regarded by the Greeks as one of them. I only had to snap my fingers.

Thankfully, Dagmar and our baby left the country safely. The day after her departure, there was a knock on my door. Her father returned the stroller I had refurbished so lovingly. At that moment, something snapped inside me. I pushed him out the door. I wanted nothing more

to do with that man. Still boiling with anger, I grabbed the stroller and threw it into the ravine. With tears in my eyes, I walked back. I was alone again. I now had no more contact with the family from Germany. I heard through the grapevine that Dagmar's father had made an excursion to Santorini and that he would fly to Germany soon. The only friends in Crete that I had now were the stars in the sky which sparkled brighter than ever above the house. It seemed that they were getting closer. Their light also illuminated my heart. I no longer felt alone in my house with all those friends around me. At night, I often went out and watched the light of the stars and the moon for hours and sing spontaneously. I was then reminded of the name Osho gave me—Alok Gayaka, the singer of light.

I enjoyed my home in the mountains, the smell of jasmine, and the panoramic view of the vast ocean and the beach. I began to make plant all kinds of vegetables and flowers. I didn't enjoy it for long because the landlord's goats had eaten all those delicious, juicy greens. However, it didn't bother me. I wasn't angry. I enjoyed life again. Life was good. I saw that the one couldn't exist without the other. Night after night, I worked my heart out. The hard work was a burden on my vocal cords. I had to be very careful because without a voice, I had no work and no money. Thank God that didn't happen. I was a little hoarse and husky occasionally, but I found that the people didn't mind. In fact, they thought it sounded interesting.

Meanwhile, my car started to make strange sounds so I brought it to the garage. It turned out to be something serious so repair would be very expensive. When the engine problems began to show again, I had to repaired it. I had no choice because I needed that car. It gave me everything on the island. Without a helmet, I rode along the winding roads of the island on my motorcycle. I also rode it to advertising myself. With a roaring engine and an occasional honk of the horn, I drove along the beaches and boulevards. "Look, there goes that singer Luka," I heard people say. "Shall we watch him tonight?" The publicity stunt always worked perfectly. I also needed it to transport myself from the house to the city because it was a long way up the mountain. For the transport of my equipment, I hired a taxi while my car was in the garage.

The pleasant, balmy breeze began to feel more like a headwind. The large Crete Star fired me on the spot because a group of Germans were angry and had walked out. I protested at first and said that the group had walked out because the beer was bad, but he didn't listen.

My work in the other restaurant was fortunately regular. The owners were British and therefore, the audience consisted mainly of Englishmen who appreciated my style and repertoire. They drank a lot which was again good for sales. The boss himself loved a drink and the more he drank, the crazier he got. He then asked me to do some games. Some of those were so vulgar and obscene that I refused to cooperate with it. A banana was placed in the blouse of a woman and a man then had to eat the banana without using his hands. After much deliberation, and even though I needed the money to pay the rent and costly repairs badly, I still decided to terminate the contract. Now, I had two gigs less per week. On one hand, it was good for my voice because singing for four to five hours a night for majority of the week was a bit too much. Luckily, I kept enough performances and sometimes, I picked up a gig here and there.

It was customary for the Greeks to hold international evenings. It was always a challenge as I got a lot of bookings. For most Western tourists, they already had enough of that Greek music after some time. I had more success and it caused bad blood among the Greeks because I was always hired. I burst with work while many Greek musicians were out of work. It angered them more when they learned that I earned five times more than the Greek waiters. One night, before a show in the middle of the season, I was suddenly threatened by a Greek who made it clear to me that they would hurt me if I performed at the Flisvos Hotel. I discussed the incident with the management of the hotel. I decided not to give in to the threat and just continue my performances. I didn't feel my save presence on the island anymore. While I sang, I kept looking around me to see which direction a shot could be discharged. Luckily, it didn't happen but I felt that the pressure was raised ever higher.

I sat in my beautiful villa on the mountain in the heat, without water and without a shower. No matter what I did, I always got an answer, "Don't worry, things will be better tomorrow." When I couldn't pay the rent, the situation was completely untenable. I was threatened and what

started as a dream slowly turned into a nightmare. Everything went so well that it eventually had to go wrong. What I did encountered was increasing opposition and hatred. Late at night when I got home, I sat on my terrace, listened to the crickets, and stared at the thousands of stars in the sky. No, there were not thousands but millions, billions. I was only one grain of sand on the beach but still part of the whole. During those wonderful nights, I felt so connected to the whole. I longed for unity, a oneness with everything around me.

Every evening, two women came for a drink where I sang. They were tour operators who worked for an English company and they were inseparable. Most tourists usually stayed only a few weeks on the island but these women stayed throughout the season. They were two beautiful young ladies and they were now a permanent item in my show. I not only sang for them, I also gave them flowers. For me, it was always a wonderful point during the evening. It was as if a good friend or family member was visiting me. One morning, I was talking about this and that when the hairdresser asked if I had already heard of the news. She told me that the previous night, a young tour operator was hit by a scooter as she was leaving a disco. She was dead. Of course, the hairdresser didn't know that I knew her. For a moment, I was giddy before my eyes and immediately thought of her friend. With half-cropped hair, I ran out of the shop to the place where the accident had occurred. As I stood there, I saw her friend. I ran to her and just held her. She whispered in my ear, "Is she in the sky, Luka?" With a broken voice and eyes full of tears, I replied, "Of course she is in heaven." After that, I often sat at the table where she sat, and then I looked out at the scene of the accident. I realized again how one can suddenly move to another life. This life is uncertain and while we make ourselves busy, it could be over anytime. When I looked up to the stars, I tried to see if I could find her there. Every evening, after the song *My Way* by Frank Sinatra, I sang the song *The Rose* by Bette Midler, the song they had always found so beautiful, "Some say love is a river..." She had died far from home. Her death became my agony. The fear that I would die at 54 years of age came back.

I only had two years to go. It was now August and it was still peak season. After mid-October, the season would be over again. Was it time to go back to the Netherlands?

76. MIKE

I now had the time and desire to make my own songs. I found some songs I had already covered and recorded in a tiny little studio. The CDs went like hotcakes during my performances. Some said that they listened to my CD on the beach and got tears in their eyes from certain songs. I was very happy with this sale. As soon as I had recouped the costs, I was able to record my own songs with only a guitar accompaniment by Mike Seidelman, the owner of the little studio. Mike had just started his own record label called Fly Records and was interested in new material. Through the collaboration, a bond formed between him, his wife, and me. Mike had lived on Crete for years. I had heard about him and sometimes, I saw him from a distance. However, we had never met before. He had to leave Germany for good after his own company, which had been worth millions, went bankrupt. He fled to Crete and set up this small company. Music was his life and his wife worked as a receptionist in a hotel. According to him, he sold about six to ten songs a year to a music publisher and he survived on the proceeds. In Germany, he was rock & roll musician. He had a dream and that was once to score a big hit. I also told him about my dream of setting up a village called "Village of Love" somewhere in Crete or Santorini, where people who were released from prison or psychiatric institutions would be accommodated. It was a dream that I had carried deep in my heart since I left India. It was to be a village full of light and love which met the love of Buddha, Jesus, and Osho. The music would be with such energy and power. When I spoke of it, tears came into my eyes because I myself longed for love and warmth.

That dream became stronger in me. It controlled my life. In my head, I constantly heard the words of song that came after John F. Kennedy was assassinated, "*What the world needs now is love, sweet love.*" Kennedy himself said, "Some people see things and say why? I dream of things that never were and say why not?" That was what I felt. I dreamt of things

that weren't there and said to myself, "Why not?" Often when I was on my motorcycle, I stopped somewhere on the mountain, looked down, and saw a village with houses that were built into the hillside. In my mind, I imagined that it was my village. Then, I saw people hit by a light of love. I often talked about my dream with Mike and the others, and the reactions were very mixed. One thought it was a brilliant idea while another told me I was crazy. This idea arose from a village on Santorini at a time I wasn't ready for it. Without money, I couldn't have much of a dream. During the recording sessions, Mike began to show increasing interest in my songs and my dream. My songs had a very distinctive sound with no fixed shape or rhythm but it hit the people in one way or another. Mike saw a kind of spiritual singer in me. Meanwhile, he was working on other productions. He let me hear one of them. I listened to it and said that it would immediately be a big hit. First, he laughed but I remained serious and said, "Maybe I can make my dream come true that way." Mike said, "Okay, write the Dutch lyrics and we'll record it before you go back to the Netherlands." I wrote a song entitled *The Sea Is Blue* and would be recorded when the season was over. Now, it was September and the nights were still warm. Tourists still came though I saw that it slowly became less.

77. SUZANNA

On one of those nights I was singing in the Flisvos Hotel, a waiter brought me a drink that was offered by one of my guests. I shoved the drink quickly under my chair and sang on. A moment later, there was a beautiful young lady who said to me in broken English, "Say, you don't drink, eh?" I said laughing, "No, I don't drink." Something happened between her and me. Sparks beat about and butterflies began to flutter in my stomach. Her name was Suzanna. She came from Denmark and lived in Copenhagen. She was a single mother and had a daughter of eleven years. I was instantly infatuated with her. I was so in love that I forgot my lyrics and took longer breaks during my performances. In those breaks, I asked her to dance which was something I never did. While dancing, the entire hotel staff saw how we were in love with each other. The people who knew me were happy for me that I had found someone after all

that misery. With Suzanne in my arms, I sang to the full moon with my wireless microphone into the early hours of the morning. There was one song in particular that I sang to her and since then has had a very special meaning for me. It was *September Morn* by Neil Diamond. After the show, I took her daughter to their hotel. On the way, the three of us walked arm in arm along the sea and every time, I heard Suzanne say "This isn't true." I looked into her eyes and whispered, "It's true." While the waves hit the beach, I kissed her. I drowned with my heart and soul into this unprecedented new love. That night, we made an appointment for the next day. She would remain for ten days in Crete before she would fly back to Copenhagen. The next day, I took them around the island. Her daughter was named Nathalie and was a darling child. We drove up to my house on top of the mountain. For a moment, I had my own family as I had always wanted. In this house we slept and from there, we went to the beach or the mountains. The emptiness in me was gone and had been replaced by a dream that had become reality not only for me, but also for Suzanna and her daughter. Tears welled up in my eyes. In the evening, when there were no performances, the three of us stayed in the living room and watched a tiny field mouse that was always in a corner. He was the last member of our family and had become our mouse.

One evening, I stood in front of the large window by the old table and stared at the sea. Suzanna suddenly noticed that I wasn't only the lead singer of the hotel. I was on my way to enlightenment. I was beaten with astonishment. Where did she get that wisdom? For the first time, someone saw me as I really was. That almost never happened because I never talked about it. That night, she stroked me very softly and sweetly. I had that feeling of coming home again. I drank her love to the fullest, as if I knew it would be a one-off. I knew then I had to go on my way alone. I wanted a small family and I felt that I had earned it, too. Everything was right as everything fit well. This was paradise with my old car, my home on the mountain, and now with my family. This was what I needed. With gratitude, I looked back to those ten days of unity, happiness, and joy. The heaviest was the day of parting. I carried their bags to the bus that would take them to the airport. That night, all the

guests sympathized with us. Her suitcases were like lead as they were so heavy. It was either her bags were so heavy or I simply lacked the strength to carry them. With great difficulty, I put their suitcases in the luggage compartment of the bus. Then, the most difficult moment came—the farewell. I had to say goodbye to something that had just blossomed and broken just as quickly. I sat on the patio and watched the bus fade from sight. It left me with a confused heart full of memories that played through my head. The song *September Morn*, the dance, the love, the sea—everything was gone for good. I had to learn to let go no matter how beautiful, how good, or how loving it was. That night, I couldn't fully entertain the audience. Afterwards, I drove home alone. Once inside, I sat down on the couch on the very spot where I had been sitting with them. I saw the little mouse looking at me as if to say, "Is it true that Suzanna and Nathalie have gone away? I said, "Little mouse, they are gone. They are away from here but not from my heart." I gave him a few crumbs of bread. That night, I woke up and felt that the mouse was gone. Who was the woman who had come to bring me happiness all the way from Copenhagen? Who was that woman who whispered in my ear that I was too good for this world? Who was the woman who called me from Denmark with a song in the background, *Starry Starry Night*? Who was that woman who had moved me to the point of tears? I had so many questions but no answers. That woman was gone as fast she came.

September Morn was indeed September morn. The weather was colder and unpleasant. One by one, all the hotels closed their doors and soon, no tourists were seen on the entire island.

Everything in life is passing—happiness, sadness, and life itself. As the sun rises and sets, nothing is lost. The season was over but I couldn't go to the Netherlands because the recordings weren't finished. Meanwhile, my ex-wife got in touch with me. I had to affix my signature on the deed of sale of our house in Baarn. Assuming that she had arranged everything well, I confidently signed the contract and sent it right back. It soon turned out that I gained three thousand guilders. With that money, I paid for the recordings.

78. PIKRIS—VILLAGE OF LOVE

I had no income, my home in the mountains was too expensive, and it was too cold up there in the mountains. So, I moved to an apartment in the village of Pikris, not far from Rethymno. It was the village that was the model for my dream—The Village of Love. The village was entirely in its original condition and you could imagine that you were in the Middle Ages. I felt right at home there and got to know the mayor well. The mayor was a Greek who worked in the Netherlands for a time. Since he was disapproved in the Netherlands, he returned to his village with the money he earned. I got to know several people who lived on benefits and bought a house with the money. Quite frankly, I didn't find it fair and wanted no part of it. Some were caught while the others were lucky and had the chance to flee. I lived there from day to day and relied on what life could offer me. In October and November, I didn't have much. There were no shows anymore so I used my time to write and create songs which I would take to the Netherlands. This time, I felt that it could be my last time on Crete. The threats had been violent and I had to cancel many performances. Therefore, I lost money. I perished in my own success. It had been a year of extremes, misery, give and take, crying and starting again, and a fear of death. Sometimes when I walked through Pikris, I imagined as if the dream had already come true. Pikris was my "village of love". Suddenly, I looked at the old school buildings and houses with different eyes. I looked down on the terrace of Porta where all kinds of artists performed. Pikris was the ideal environment for it. Occasionally, I spoke with Mike about my village and he became increasingly fascinated by the dream.

Dagmar traced my address. One day, she called and asked if I still wanted to visit my son in Germany for Christmas. Her message shocked me greatly. Suddenly, all kinds of paternal feelings began to play in me. My child was a year old now and when I heard his still small voice on the phone, I couldn't restrain myself and tears rolled down my cheeks.

My plans to hibernate in Pikris were scattered to pieces. Unfortunately it was not Christmas, but January that I left my village Pikris for Germany.

Would I ever come back here?

In my mind I saw the Greeks standing in front of me shouting, "If you dare to come here to sing, then..." Intuitively, I knew my path would lead me elsewhere. Mike, who had taken my songs under contract, promised to expose my songs through a whole new medium of contact, the Internet, which I didn't understand at that time. I must have been approximately 52 years old when I took off from Heraklion. Thunder and lightning paved the way to Germany. Was this a frightening harbinger of a festive farewell? After a further uneventful flight, the plane landed in Frankfurt where no one stood to welcome me. We agreed that I would take the train to Darmstadt and at the station, they would wait for me. When I got off the train, I saw her and standing beside her was a wonderful little boy who looked at me with a big smile on his face. He proudly ran to me, gave me a kiss, and cried, "Daddy!" After this warm greeting, we went to their home where I would stay for several weeks before going to the Netherlands. The reunion with my son made me feel good. He was a wonderful, sweet boy and we enjoyed each other's company. My relationship with his mother was unfortunately less encouraging. Somehow, she managed to make me angry every time and I couldn't forget what had happened in Crete. I was glad when it was time to leave for the Netherlands. However, I had to say goodbye to my son who had never belonged to me from the beginning. The role of the father was now taken by his grandfather as I saw and felt.

79. HILVERSUM, NETHERLANDS

In the Netherlands, I rented a room in Hilversum for a while. Fortunately, I soon got a cottage in Merelstraat through the housing association. Although I was in the Netherlands and had my own house, I felt that my wanderings had not yet ended. I wasn't ready. I had to make one last trip to Greece. I thought I had come home but a wave of rejection from my family came down on me. They didn't accept who I was. They saw me as a wanderer, an adventurer, and a loser. I confronted them to deal with a painful past. Maybe it had something to do with my father who had died some years ago due to a myocardial infarction. The figure of my father suddenly started playing in my head and in my heart. In his life, he was pretty bruised by comments and rejections. My

thoughts went back to the time I was in therapy and there, I repeatedly met my father. The confrontation with my father filled me with great anger, pain, loneliness, and grief. I then learned who he really was and all that negativity in my heart melted. The anger flowed away and then my heart was filled with compassion for him. I felt that he suffered because he never realized his dream of becoming a singer.

As a child, I had always been afraid of him, especially his eyes which could hypnotize you. Unfortunately, he was not a father to his children. I remember that he cried a lot later in life to recover the lost time and comfort. Every day, he drank his sadness away. He also began to paint like his brother, Uncle William. The pictures that my father painted looked quite primitive and almost childish. No one in the family liked them. I myself also had trouble getting to like them until one day, my father showed me two or three paintings which were wonderful, beautiful, and mystical. I can still see those images. My father told me in amazement that he had made them without thinking and I knew what he meant. His hand had taken over the job and it showed. When I came back to visit him and wanted to look at those paintings, he told me that he had thrown them in the trash. Even he had to experience how it was to be egoless. No, he wasn't Vincent van Gogh and no one in the family wanted to his work on the walls.

My father was seen by the family as a loser and therefore, no one visited his grave after his funeral. I remember that he was buried in Hilversum and I supported my mother because no one else did. I also remember how he lay on his bed and I wanted to hold his hand. My brother cried, "Don't touch him!" I was so shocked because my heart was speaking to my father, "Go, Dad. Go to the light" because I felt he was struggling and hovered over his body. I knew those things were discussed in seminars and workshops I had about death including those of Jan Foudraïne's. On the way to the cemetery, I bought some roses, not knowing whether his grave still existed. I arrived at the cemetery and sought one path after another. Suddenly, I stopped at an intersection of paths. I felt a strong wind and my heart was filled with an incredible love. I recognized that feeling immediately. I looked around and saw a neglected grave with a stone with the name of my father which bore the

same name as mine, “Lodewijkus Marinus van den Driesschen”. When I looked closely, I saw that the name was misspelled. I thought, “Even here, he may not be who he really was and is.” I walked to the tomb, saw the many weeds, and heard “Loetje”—as my mother always called him—roar with laughter. Again, my heart was filled with an incredible love that warmed me from head to toe. Still with the roses in my hand, I stood there bent over his grave. The tomb, the stone, everything was covered with moss but it didn’t bother me. I plucked the petals one by one as I had done during my performances in Crete, and spread them over his grave. I had no words for him. There was only a high sense of love and compassion. A little further on was a bench which I sat on. I closed my eyes. He was a father who had no father. He sang the highest song that still vibrates in my heart. I left the cemetery with only one thought—Thank you, Dad.

Back in civilization, my family heard what I had done and my mother couldn’t resist seeing my visit as hypocrisy. Yeah, so it was always. Everything that was good and beautiful wasn’t recognized and immediately made ridiculous. Once, I went with my father to Middelburg looking for our ancestors because he thought we were royalty. We looked into the municipal archives but couldn’t find anything. “No, no,” he said. “The answer must be in the blue book.” Unfortunately, it wasn’t for him. As we drove back, my wife Ineke sat next to me. In the back was my father. I laughed but I didn’t say why. I looked through the rearview mirror and saw my father said in silence the name “Baron Habbeniks” which means Baron Havenone. I thought, “Poor man, this is your destiny.” The next day, I brought my wife to her office and drove through the gates of Soestdijk Palace. The marechaussee saluted me. I dropped my wife off at the left wing. I drove along the platform to the other side of the fence and suddenly laughed uncontrollably at the thought that I was the son of Baron Habbeniks.

Within the family, I wasn’t exactly re-embraced like a prodigal son. I earned my keep by sweeping the floor of the video store with my sister and brother. I was kept small. My brother showed me the door and his wife shouted at me because she found that my writings were without

virtues. No, there was no place for me in the family. I craved for love and recognition.

I had gotten a record deal with Red Bullet. The song was entitled *The Sea Is Blue*. Radio Hilversum was kind to me and played my single day and night. They even made a video of it. Yet, I still didn't feel at home in the Netherlands. My heart was still in a cramp. I was humiliated and trampled mostly by my brother. Why? Was he afraid it that it would come out that he had abused me as a child? It was during that time that he was filled with guilt asked me if I had trouble. He inquired about my psychological problems. Was the Netherlands not ready for me or was I not ready for the Netherlands? I felt that there was another way to go, one last trip in which I would cease to exist. I no longer wanted this life that I couldn't sustain. An inner voice said, "Go to the island of Crete or Santorini." My 54th birthday was fast approaching.

Last night, I had a dream. I was somewhere in the mountains on a hike and suddenly, I was lost. As I wandered around, I came to an abyss. I turned to walk away but I couldn't. The road dropped steeply and with every step I took, I slid back a step or two. One after another attempt failed and my sweat broke out. I realized that I was dreaming. Then, I woke up and the abyss was gone. I thought, "This is enlightenment—waking up in your dream."

I remember that I had so often been to the abyss and tried to crawl up again, but it was no use. For this last trip, I was faced with a choice which wasn't really a choice. I stood in front of an abyss and I had to jump. I had to make that trip. I was on radio and TV. I was happy and grateful. I felt like a fish in water in the studio and on stage, and I remember that I was asked for an interview on Christmas Eve. The studio was beautifully lit with many candles and there was an atmosphere of love. A lot of my own songs were played. Everything smelled of mysticism all over the Hilversum station were the words and music that had come out of me—my voice and my freedom in sound. I thanked "existence" which had given me those songs. These were songs of silence which were meant to be heard in silence.

Everything seemed too good to be true but I soon caught wind of what Mike was really doing. His plan was to record my healing voice

and try to cure older people from all over the world through my music, lyrics and voice. "The Healing Power of a Voice", it was initially called. He advised me to participate with the elderly people in the Netherlands. However, I felt it was not right. It started to smell like a scam. There were some potential investors for the project who were suspected individuals and Mike himself renounced the whole project because he was afraid what would happen if he could not repay them on time. My beautiful dreams and good intentions for a village for the needy, for people who lived in despair, were put aside. When everything came so close, I was threatened by my own dream. I had plans for a village for people who had been given an anti-social stamp like Vincent van Gogh, people who didn't fit into the normal world, and people who were beaten and humiliated. I had met them in jail, in the institutions, and in casual encounters. My heart was always open when I was with them. However, to achieve my dream, I needed money, lots of money. That money I didn't have and Mike would help me with it. I felt that there was something in the air but I didn't know what it was. By now, it was already July and in August, I would be 54 years of age.

The old Porsche which I had purchased was almost ready to leave for Greece. My original plan was to follow the known route through Italy. However, that plan fell through. This time, I had to follow another path and I had trouble driving on it. It was so bad that I almost fell off the road for a number of times. Nothing worked to calm me down, even the soothing music or meditation. My heart just didn't want to drive so fast. Since my stay in India, my whole life had changed. It was like my steps were placed before me. I couldn't change them. I had a fear of bridges, tunnels, and high speeds. After the death of Osho, my life had become slower. The highway had become hell for me as my heart didn't want more. Death also played through my head. I would be 54 years old in a few weeks. A voice cried to me, "Jump! Trust me, it's good." This was the road that lay before me, Greece. This time though, I avoided the highways and chose another route. I drove through villages, narrow roads, and paths which I had never tried before.

80. CRETE, GREECE (6)—MY LAST JOURNEY

My last money I had put in the Porsche. It was a beautiful car with an open roof and headlights which automatically went up and down. I felt like a king in it and fancied myself in Greece driving by the sea before and after a performance on the boulevard. I was all packed with my beautiful costumes which I bought at a thrift store in Hilversum. It was somewhat cramped in the Porsche because of my equipment and a guitar case with a Yamaha guitar in it, also from the thrift store. So, I left my house in Hilversum in July 1997 while people from the street shouted to me, "What are you going to do, impersonate Elvis Presley or something?"

I didn't look back because I already knew I was never coming back to that house. I drove on small roads to the south towards Greece. My car ran but gave off a strange odor. Soon, I was lost and ended up on the highway on the Zaltbommel bridge. My sweat broke out when I was on that narrow bridge. Once I arrived on the other side, I couldn't go back. I was to drive slowly and find the way to Greece. I thought whether it was good to rest and continue to travel when I was ready. I decided to travel to Belgium and park at a camp site. I left the highway and drove through the country roads through Belgium to Spa, where I set up my tent among the Belgians who were there on vacation. I proudly parked my Porsche but I got comments from other campers, "You're not going to sleep here with that thing, huh?" In the evening, there was a party given by a local DJ. I asked him to play my single *The Sea Is Blue*. I thought that it would open the door for good, but it was different. He refused to play my single and I sat alone at a table and stared at the beautiful young Belgian women who even didn't consider giving me a glance. Also, the disc jockey just kept running his own records with his little record player. Nevertheless, I tried asking him again and pointed to the picture on the cover. I said, "Look, it's my single." Again, he said no. I stood up and walked back to my tent. That night, I fell asleep and dreamt that I was lying in bed with one of those Belgian beauties.

The next morning, I tried to start my Porsche but I couldn't. I had to call the ANWB for help three times. They advised me not to drive to Greece because there was something wrong with the crankshaft. What

was I to do now? I couldn't drive back to the Netherlands. I decided to stay at the campsite and enjoy nature in this wooded area. I could put my mind to rest and plan ahead. Oh, this was different from all the travels I've had. It started to rain so I silently waited for the weather to clear up. While I waited, a voice said in my tent, "Go, my child. The weather is dry. Follow what is to follow." It was raining but I still went to the town of Spa to see if I could find a gig in a hotel or restaurant. That didn't work. In my beloved car, I drove back to the camp and I felt that it would be my last few kilometers. Yes, I had once dreamed of a trip with only a guitar, a suitcase, and nothing else. Thus, the world would turn day to day and I could earn a living just by singing on the streets and take life as it comes. However, I didn't plan to sing on the streets. I decided to try to drive back to Maastricht and try to sell my car and equipment. Maastricht was not far from the Ardennes where my tent was. While I was in my tent, I counted the hours like I was on death row. Ideally, I would just lie safe in nature and listen to the trickling of the rain on my single tent. However, my nearly empty wallet said I didn't have much time to lose. I had to get rid of everything that I didn't need ASAP. To begin, I had too much clothes with me. I bought some bags, filled them with everything, and put them somewhere no one could find them. All those wonderful costumes from McGregor, Hugo Boss, etc. were in the bag and I could no longer take care of my audience. After I had dismounted my tent and said adieu to the Belgians, I drove back to the Netherlands in search of another campsite. As soon as I set up my tent, it started to pour again. It really poured from the sky and it wouldn't stop. Eventually, the canvas could no longer hold it. The water seeped in and everything was soaked. My mood didn't improve. Moreover, my car, which was next to the tent, wouldn't start. Eventually it did but it didn't sound good.

I soon found a music store that sold second-hand musical instruments. The guy wanted to buy my sound equipment for a bargain. I had no other option so I said yes. He also knew a place where I could sell my car. With the money that my car fetched, I continued my journey. I only got 400 guilders for it which wasn't much. Anyway, the motor had too many defects that couldn't be restored. Only the sports wheels had some value.

With four hundred guilders, I took the bus back to the camp which now stood clear of the rain. I decided to stay there for two nights and then continue to travel. The next day, I went to see if there was a travel agent who could arrange cheap tickets or knew other solutions because one thing was certain—I was going to Greece. That night, I slept while the raindrops gently tapped on the canvas of my tent. My tent, which I always brought along on my travels, was always my faithful house-in-distress.

At the travel agency, I was quickly told that there was no available cheap travel to Greece. All flights were booked because it was July. That year brought a lot of rain so everyone had booked for a trip to the sun at the last minute. What now? Everything just happened. I was overwhelmed. In the far distance was my dream. It was a village of love and music somewhere in the mountains for people from around the world. What now? I knew there was no choice in this life and that this could be my last trip. I was on the road to nowhere.

Because I didn't have enough money, I decided to travel to Ticino which I knew so well. The next day, a camper brought me to the train station in Maastricht. From there, I would travel to Locarno in Switzerland. I could already smell the pizza at Micro on the main square in the city center. I was immediately a little reassured. Now, there were no highways, no fear of having to go through those long, dark tunnels, but only relaxed traveling. This time, I was only with a suitcase, a guitar, a small tent, a gas burner, some lyrics, and a costume, in case I would get a gig in an expensive hotel or posh restaurant. In the streets of Ticino, that was always possible. The train rumbled on and I closed my eyes. I was on the way to my 54th birthday. I was on the way to old acquaintances. Would they still be there? I would know soon. The train roared forth and I left the Netherlands behind me, the country where I was born and where I lived through the cracks. I was not a real Dutchman with my little Australian accent. For my family, I didn't meet their expectations of a prodigal son. Twenty years in Australia had left its mark—from rags to riches, from riches to rags. I had gone through hell. I was too afraid to live and I was terrified of death. Now, I was on my way to fall into a ravine. Everything seemed to be going in that direction. "This is the

moment,” said my heart. In the past, a dream was born. It was a dream to be of service to others. No, I didn’t run after my own tail. I didn’t run away from death even if those fears were hugely playing tricks on me on this trip. The train slowed down and came to a screeching halt. I looked out the window and saw the sign “Locarno”. I grabbed my stuff and got off the train. It was early in the morning and it was still quiet on the platform. Only the twittering birds were there to welcome me.

Since there were no buses and riding a taxi was too expensive, I walked through the streets of Locarno and along the boulevard on the edge of Lake Maggiore with my suitcase in one hand and my guitar in the other. With each step, my arms couldn’t seem to bear the weight of my luggage. With trembling arms and legs, I arrived at the campsite. Meanwhile, there were many other people waiting to get a place. Everyone had to wait for eight hours. I could do nothing but wait because there was no alternative for me. A hotel was too expensive. The reception opened in eight hours and urged everyone inside. Eventually, I got a very small spot. It was a hard piece of land right in the sun and I had to pay one hundred guilders per night for it! I knew then that I would never be able to sustain myself for long, even if I sang on the street everyday.

I decided to stay there for a few days and then look for cheaper accommodation, perhaps where I had previously lived in Ascona. Tired of traveling and lugging, I quickly put up my tent and went to sleep. It was very hot and I was exhausted. That same afternoon, I went into town and saw Locarno at its best. I saw that a film festival was underway again. I then sang in La Palma in Ascona under the stars of the heaven, but now it was different. Now, I had no car and no equipment with me. As I wandered through the streets, I found my way to Micro with its delicious slices of pizza which still filled my stomach for very little money. I recognized every place I had been to earlier, especially the places where I was expelled because I had no license. It seemed like a goodbye tour, a final salute. I got that feeling when I took a look in the La Palma Hotel. I passed a second-hand shop and as always, I couldn’t resist going inside. While I was looking around, I heard a voice say, “Hi, Luka.” I looked right in the eyes of Eddy, the man who looked exactly like me and who was my boss in the San Pedro in Ancona. We looked

deep into each other's eyes. After a short chat, I learned that he had lost everything. Why? Was it his drinking that cost him his girlfriend, who as far as I knew also liked a glass? I told Eddy of my trip and that evening in Ancona, we would get together with some old friends to see if there were hotels or restaurants where I could perform. But first, I went to Muralto and looked for the house where I had rented the room with a balcony. However, I couldn't find the house. For hours, I wandered through the streets and asked around but I couldn't find it. Was it all hocus-pocus? I saw the large La Palma where I impressed the people with my voice. I saw people sitting up in the balcony and people dancing on the boulevard while I sang the song *hhe Last Waltz* by Engelbert Humperdinck. I had a car and audio equipment then. And now? Now, everything was so different. In the evening, I went by bus to Ancona to meet up with Eddy and go to the city.

That evening, we were like two brothers who roamed the streets. Eddy was a familiar figure and I knew that he wanted a beer. Between the calls, my music was played on CD hoping that they would react enthusiastically and would offer me a spontaneous act. It didn't work. Even with a direct question, it failed. Here in Ancona, a city which always used to manage everything, now succeeded at nothing. It was where Eddy gave me a penthouse to live in without having to pay a penny, and now he himself was broke and drunk. After he drove me back to the camp, I was again alone in my tent on the hard ground with slurred and partying campers around me. I thought about my trip. What should I do? I couldn't stay here because it cost me too much money. I could start singing until I found something else, but then I had to first go to the police station to get myself a license.

Looking for a different, less expensive place to sleep, the next day I got on the bus and found by chance a beautiful camp 10 miles outside of Locarno. The campground was spacious so you weren't too close to the other campers. There was a friendly atmosphere and I immediately began to feel at home there. It was the end of July. The owner of the site was an Italian with whom I made friends with right away. The next day, I went to Locarno to sing on the streets. Before that, I went to the police station to get a license. I didn't get one because the festival was

underway. I could come back in a week, they said. On the way back to Muralto, I passed one restaurant after another. There, I found a small restaurant where I was able to sing without a salary, but I was allowed to go around with the hat. So, instead of the big five-star restaurants where I had sung in the earlier years with a princely salary, I now sang in a small restaurant for free and I passed my cap around afterwards. However, it wasn't filled enough for the camp, the bus, and my meals. On the street, I knew I would certainly be able to earn more. I just couldn't do it now because of the film festival. Ideally, I sat somewhere along the water or on the mountains. "Stand still," my heart said. "Stand still and look at the flow of the river." My little head said, "No, you have to eat to survive." Between these energies, I was tossed. Did I want to do this? Alone with my guitar, I wanted to sing the songs I had written without a microphone and without my backing tapes. I was uncertain and shaky with singing alone with my own guitar as accompaniment to my own songs. The accompaniment sounded choppy and I constantly played out of tune. It was all an expression of my soul. I looked at the river. I loved the river and it loved me back. We were both traveling through life, to an unknown distance, each with its own purpose.

The name of the camp was Riposo, which in Italian means "rest". The town of Losone, just outside Ancona, was not far away and there flowed the mighty river, The Maggia. Almost every day, I walked there and admired the beauty and power of the river with its beautiful round stones. The sound of the rushing water was music to my ears and when I stood on a bridge and looked down, I got kind of carried away with the flow. I felt totally at rest and started writing again. I would always want to stay here, I thought. It was surrounded by mountains, there were plum and pear trees everywhere, and scurrying chickens picked up the crumbs of the freshly baked bread with Swiss cheese. However, that illusion lasted only a moment because I had to survive. I had to work. Writing about what happened to me on this journey, a diary, was an idea. The money that came was just enough, but not enough to save for my trip to Greece. It was already August and thus the tourist season in Crete. It had been a long time since I had been to Crete or Santorini. Slowly, I accepted the situation because everything was so different than

what I wanted or planned. Every time I had saved some money, it started to rain and I had no work. I could do nothing but wait. On my receiver, I listened to the voice of Brother John, an American idealist, who had a screaming voice that reached many listeners and sold a lot of books and CDs. Could I achieve anything by yelling my dream? No, but if it must be done, it will be done. On the days that it was dry and I had a license, I worked. I counted my money in the park and went straight to the bank to exchange the coins.

I walked back to Muralto to the place where I had stayed years before. I noticed that the trees were still standing and the sink and the toilet, which I often used as a shower, was still there. Was I saying goodbye to everything? Did I have to let go of everything, my beloved places and places, my friends and acquaintances? One day, I went on a walk and stretched out in the grass by the river. I looked at the mountains in the distance. Their beauty embraced my heart with love and warmth but on this day, it did not happen. I went cold and felt fear and a great emptiness. For a moment, I was nowhere and yet somewhere. It was quiet in and around me. I looked back at what I had always perceived as beauty but again, there was that void. This moment was timeless and a transformation took place in me. The light, my consciousness, became bigger and bigger. In that light, I experienced myself as a tree, water, the mountains, and something so great but also so small. I felt that I had finally come home after a long, arduous journey. I stood up and walked back to Ascona. Another person was born. In a few days, I would be 54 years old.

The days after, it started to rain again but it was actually good for me. My heart sang in silence. No, this was not a fleeting moment but a feeling that was deeply rooted. I surrendered to existence such as The Maggia did without a will or goal. The owner of the site offered me a converted bus so I could live on the outskirts of the camp. It was a very large bus which was once converted into a real house with a bedroom, kitchen, and seating. It was surrounded by trees further away from the tents. It was a beautiful house. I didn't need more. Daily, I sat outside while I wrote in my diary. The fresh breadrolls I had, I fed the birds and chickens. It was like a paradise on Earth with all those delicious plums,

apples, and pears hanging from the trees which I could pick. I got pure drinking water from the source. I was quiet inside and liked to possess almost nothing. It added so much value to the things that I had like my pen, guitar, and world receiver which I still used to listen to the sermons of Brother John. I no longer went to Locarno to sing not only because it was raining, but mostly because I no longer had to pay rent. I was tired of walking through the busy streets of Locarno to find somewhere to sing. Occasionally, I worked and got plenty for the next day. It was good.

The weeks of August passed. I was deliriously happy with my drink and my bite to eat, and I enjoyed the beautiful nature around me. Every day, I walked for hours along the river and sat on a stone somewhere. Sometimes, I stopped at a village, reflected on a monument, and admired the skills of the men who carved through the stones. I listened to the silence and to the eternal murmur of the Maggia. My soul was gone forever and I wanted nothing more. My whole life I had lived in a world of ignorance. I had to be someone I wasn't. Finally, everything fell together.

By the end of August, most holiday guests had already gone back home and occasionally, there were some new guests who stayed only a few days. The rush was over and I was one of the few who remained in my van with my coffee, bread, and sometimes a pizza. I got water from a tap outside the field and used candles for the light that I needed. I cooked my food on a small gas burner. It was not cold in the bus and a sleeping bag kept me warm throughout the night. I thought, everything passes, even this would be over. I was reminded of that one twig that I threw in the river. I felt like that one twig, alone but not lonely. I felt such gratitude for everything. I just wondered if I would be able to realize my dream or if I would die a physical death this year. There were only four months left.

It was September and I was told that I had to leave soon because at winter the camp was closing down. Where would I go? I realized again that I was on my way to Greece. Sometimes, I looked in the mirror and asked myself why my life was the way it was. Yes, I had to reconcile with the thought that I had to bid farewell to my beloved Ascona and my river. "Everything passes," sounded again. We humans live in a world

where everything is becoming faster and better. I had participated myself by buying a Porsche, but see how pleased and happy I was once I had nothing? This was life. It is our task to reach out and help others in climbing the ladder of life. Everything we do has meaning. Let every act grow and multiply like the seeds of flowers and plants.

To travel to Greece, I needed money. So, I started playing with or without a license, with or without rain. Soon, I had enough money to travel by train to Italy and from there, take the boat from Ascona to Greece. I assessed which stuff I could bring with me. What I couldn't bring disappeared into the trash bin of the campsite. My music stand and TV I left behind as thanks for the hospitality because I knew I would never come back. I had already said goodbye to Eddy and to my dear spots in Ascona. I knew I was going to miss this country and these people who had been so good to me. To me, Switzerland was the promised land with its beauty and wealth. Once the train left, I looked out the window and thanked all those lovely people who gave me money and the police for the times they had given me a license. I thanked the sparrows in the park for their twittering songs, the mountains for their beauty, and my Maggia with its incessant running water and beautiful round stones. With tears in my eyes, I stared out the window. The train soon thundered through the changing landscape with an occasional stop at a station which I recognized. Rimini was where my car ran out of petrol and where I had bought an ice cream with one guilder. There was Cattolica and in the distance, Porta Recananti, where I had sung at Casa Bianca for consecutive months. My old life passed me by.

Italy is so different than Switzerland. Italians love life and enjoy all the good things that life has to offer. Food and drink is a feast for them and they have so much love for art, theater, and music. I can still hear them scream, "Sing, Luka! Sing, great friend!" They jumped from their seats and brought me pizza, wine, and lire which filled my pockets. Now, it was different. The train stopped in Ancona. I packed my suitcase and guitar and walked out of the station looking for a cheap hotel. The next day, I was going to ask for a mere spot on the boat to Greece. It turned out that I could only leave after several days. That gave me the opportunity to get some rest. After resting a few days, I packed my stuff

and went aboard the boat. The crossing to Patras would last until the next day. That night, I slept under the stars. I looked at the millions of stars and tried to imagine the infinite universe. We are all part of that universe—the stars, the sun and the moon, but also the darkness. It was just a few more hours before I would set foot in Patras. There, I would have to choose between Crete and my beloved island of Santorini.

Slowly, it began to get light and I breathed in the fresh, salty sea air through my nose. Years ago when I was in therapy, I had to puke. They used salt to purify the body and spirit. From Patras, there was a bus to Athens and from there, I could take a bus to Piraeus. With luck, I could take the boat, which usually left in the evening around seven o'clock for Santorini and Crete. First, I had to try to get on the bus. I waited between the Greeks and tourists. No one knew when the bus would leave. It was hot and the dust of the roads penetrated deep into my lungs. This was the part of Greece that I didn't love. After hours of waiting and gazing, after I had placed my suitcase and guitar in the hold I could finally get in and sit on a hard chair. The bus was packed and left bumping over the rough roads to Athens. I began to feel better as I felt closer to my promised land. I looked out the window and saw the mountains, the sea, some sheep, a stray goat, and an old man on a donkey. Also, I saw that the flowers were withered for it was already the end of September, the end of the summer season. After the bumpy ride and many structures, I saw my village in a dream and its visions mingled with Pikris in Crete. I continued to dream until my attention was drawn to a man to my left, who constantly looked back. He did this every time the bus stopped to let several passengers off. It gave me a bad feeling and my alarm bells started to ring. When the bus finally arrived in Athens, I let everyone get off the bus first. When I was about to get my suitcase and guitar in the hold, I saw that the man had stolen my things. I saw how he ran off with my suitcase and I screamed, "Come back!" It made him drop the suitcase and ran away in a panic. I was so happy and felt so good. The damage was controlled.

Now, I had to find a taxi which could bring me to Piraeus because it was already almost six o'clock in the evening. However, at the taxi stand, lines of people were waiting for a ride. I had no time to lose because I

had to catch the boat. I still managed to get to the boat on time. While all the ropes were loosened and the tailgate was lifted, I ran on board with my suitcase and guitar in hand. A few minutes later, the ship had already cast off from the wharf and we left the harbor of Piraeus. We went towards Crete, the island of Zorba. A man standing next to me said, "I have never seen anyone board so quickly. It was like a miracle." I quickly found a place for my guitar and suitcase. It was still light and with a thousand passengers on board, we continued to sail the harbor on the way to the port of Heraklion where we would arrive the next morning. I looked around and saw Athens getting smaller and more insignificant. The boat made a stop at the usual islands and all the stops on the trip seemed like a real odyssey, as Homer had described. Oh, how I loved Greece with its islands and Aegean Sea with its beauty and rich history. While the seagulls greeted me, the water lapped against the ship, and smoke billowed from the big pipe, I felt intensely happy. I couldn't understand how people could hate, make war, and destroy the Earth. Did they have no sense of the goodness and beauty of this earth? Why must we destroy everything that is delicate and pure? We sailed over the still water on the way to Crete. The ferry pushed the water aside with force as if to say, "Make room because Luka is coming." To what extent did I have control over this trip? Where was my responsibility? I didn't know anything but I knew there was a strength in me that propelled me in this direction.

Everyone prepared to disembark. I also picked up my stuff and walked off the ship. I knew Heraklion as a dirty and dusty town with impassable roads and streets. It is a city that you would want to leave as quickly as possible. Every time I set foot here, I was overcome by the same thought, "What am I doing here?" The season was already over. The island began to slowly deflate and I didn't have much money. I just had enough to take the bus to Rethymno. It was a two-hour drive through the mountains and along the sea with water which was now no longer so blue because of the gray sky and pollution. I just realized how life here seemed much slower. Rethymno finally came into view. It is a city in the middle of the island. It was the place which I had mistaken for Hannia. The harbor,

the streets, and the endless series of terraces and hotels where I had sung so much—everything came back to my memory.

With a beating heart, I ran to Fly Records where Mike had his recording studio. “So, here you are at last,” he said when I rang the bell. His little house wasn’t far from the bus station. With a barking dog in the background, I was admitted. I felt that I wasn’t welcome. I smelled a rat. I felt it in my veins and didn’t understand the situation. He wasn’t happy to see me. Was this really Mike? Why wasn’t he happy with the record deal that I got at Red Bullet? First, I had to find shelter. What I found was a temporary place to sleep in the basement of a cheap hotel where the staff normally stayed. It was a room without windows or natural light. It was ten miles outside the city and had no direct connection to it. The advantage was that the rent was not much. I knew that if I wanted to leave, I had to have money. To get money, I had to act. Fortunately, I had good contacts with a number of hotels which had their own PA system. I got a job from Pappa Nikos, as I always called him. He was the owner of many hotels on the island. He booked me for two of his hotels, the Lefkoniko where I had previously performed and a fancy hotel, Première. My first night was a huge success. In the Première, Mike had arranged a large sound reinforcement system. The sound could be heard for miles across the water. The few copies of my single *The Sea Is Blue* soon ran out of stock so I hastily ordered copies in the Netherlands. Everything went back to normal. I sang to the stars of heaven and as before, I had delicious grilled lamb chops afterwards. Also, the salary was not crazy for Greek standards. The applause felt good after all these years. However, I was tired. I wanted to sit somewhere on a deserted beach without having to think of what I should sing tonight. I didn’t have a motorcycle or scooter this time. I missed my little tour through the mountains. I only had a few weeks to act because winter was at the door. Mike still tried to persuade me to perform but I couldn’t do it anymore. There were too many tears because of what I saw and heard. Mike got angry and barked at me in an outrageous manner. He looked like a Nazi with so much hatred, so much unkindness in him. With such a person, how could I begin a village of love?

Slowly, I began to realize that my village wouldn't materialize and that everything was only done to get a lot of money for him. What now? I had to deal with a man with a heart of stone. He was a man whom no one knew the real story. Why did he stay in Crete for more than ten or fifteen years? Why didn't he go back to Germany? Over a bottle of wine, he told me that he had worked for the German government and that his job had been to get rid of important people at that time. "No, not murder," he said immediately but I didn't know whether to believe him. It dawned on me that I could forget my dream. During the day, I sat at the beach with tears in my eyes and saw in my mind all those beautiful people who came to live in my village. It felt like I had failed. I had been too naive. I signed contracts which I should never have done.

Every night, I felt empty. I had nothing—no home, no money, and no dream. I only had my lyrics, my guitar, some clothes, and my little world radio. The hotels were closing. Maybe that was a good thing because I was running on my last strength. Every evening, a performance of three to four hours was almost impossible. Everything turned against me. A strong wind blew me back with so much force. With great difficulty, I performed my last gigs. The singer was not the singer anymore. Everything was gone and my mind was conscious of it. There was only emptiness. It was a bit like how I felt in Muralto. My fear of death, drowning, and the fear that I wouldn't reach 54 years old was all over. This abundance of love and light touched me. Everything shone in the light of the sun. Somewhere from within, I heard a voice. It was the voice of Osho that said, "When I am no longer in my body, I will find you in every nook and corner of the Earth." Was it him who had pushed me in this direction? Slowly, everything was clear to me. The sense of time had become timeless. I had become a new man, alone but happy.

Every day, I rode my old moped to a dilapidated old church on a hill and burnt a candle there. Because of the large holes in the roof, I looked at the open air and the ruined stone altar with an image of Saint George and his dragon sitting on a large piece of stone. I smoked a cigarette there. The silence and the whole area touched me. I also felt sad about the fact that everything was gone. Then, I rode to Pikris which was 17 kilometers away, the place of my dreams. It had a nice road which had

just been built. From the top of the hill, I looked down at the little town. I felt like a cowboy on his horse from some Western movie. Peering into the village, I let my mind go and imagined a village full of artists who had bought or rented a house. I knew that the schools were empty and I immediately saw potential for a kind of shelter for people who had gone over the line or were lost. I saw the dried up river and the large terrace of Porto Pikris and the tavern Costas filled with thousands of people who came together to make music with the residents and artists from the village. I looked everywhere and in the distance, a large tower at the radio station could transmit this exceptional music around the world. While I stood there musing, I could smell the lemon trees and olives. The olive trees with their beautiful leaves which moved like silver in the sun smiled at me. In Santorini, I had the same dream. I already had a house to begin with but I wasn't ready to realize my dream when I was there. Slowly, it became clear to me that I had made the wrong decision. I wasn't in Crete but Santorini. How could I have become so lost? Had I not listened to my inner voice? Maybe I wasn't the person designated to carry out the dream and I was just the dreamer, the creator, the man of ideas. So, I stood there while the wind blew over the hill. I turned around and drove back to the coast. My "village of love" now seemed further away than ever.

During those last weeks in Crete, I often rode my old motorbike into the mountains to my church. I always burned a candle there and sat on the same stone which sat amongst the high grass and other debris. The church dated from the twelfth century AD. How long could it have been in this state and why did no one bother to revamp it? For me, the church was still charming despite its very dilapidated state. There was no chair in sight and it had a tourist who was in dire need. There was a cash box with some candles. Sometimes when I got there, I knew that someone had been there because there was a burning candle. I wasn't a churchgoer. For me, faith was synonymous with lies and fantasy. Here, it felt good. I enjoyed the silence and the rough environment. From there, I went on to Pikris and stopped on top of the mountain again. I looked down to the village, my village, hoping for a voice or someone who would say, "Here, you have a million. Buy all those houses and build your village."

I often stopped by Jan and Liza's place. They were Dutch friends of mine who advised me to return to the Netherlands to try to achieve my dream from there. One day when we were on their big patio, Jan suddenly stood up and said, "Come on, we're going to Pikris to visit Costas," who was a good friend of his. John often gave Costas advice when something was wrong with his benefit from the Netherlands. Costas was nowhere to be seen. Apparently, he was hiding and we only got to speak to his wife. We walked on and came to a dilapidated house where two young people from Albania lived without water or electricity. We were received with warmth and love. Above the fireplace hung a large pot which had a kind of simmering broth. They had nothing but what they had they shared in love. While we were sitting there and I looked out the window, I saw the village in the distance. I thought, "That's my village full of love, hospitality, and purity." Filled with Albanian stew, we said goodbye. We drove back to the village where we spent a long time looking for Costas. Then, we drove out of town. I looked back and wiped away a tear. It was over for good. "Pikris" meant "bitter", and things were indeed bitter for me. The doors were closed now and perhaps forever. Jan and I drove in silence over the same new road which for me had become the symbol of my village. With this new road, people could easily find their way to my village, to the light, and to the music and dances. Now, that road was closed for good. Pikris would remain bitter and a dry riverbed. Only my tears continued to flow.

In the last few weeks, I had to do a show in La Première for a couple of tour directors who had flown in to inspect the hotel. Apart from the owner and his sons, there was no one at the hotel. They expected me to sing my usual and I wanted that too, however my voice sounded different. While I staggered around the stage with my microphone and the orchestra echoed through the PA system, I observed that the director of the hotel had something in mind. I sang the songs that I had sung a thousand times before—*My Way*, *Strangers in the Night*, and the songs of Neil Diamond which I always had a lot of success in singing. While I sang, I looked at the stars and the sea. The sea, which had always been my enemy, was now my ally. I also cried inside from grief as my dream had been punctured like a balloon. I felt that my time was ending in

Crete. I got my salary and my plate of grilled lamb chops. How strange it was to sing my last song, *hTe Rose* by Bette Midler—“*Some say love is a river that drowns the tender reed.*” Mike brought me back to my hotel in his van. I sat in the back as if I were something precious that should be protected. I felt cramped but it was nice to see the staff and the guests when he stopped in front of the main entrance of the hotel. After the last show, there was nothing left on my program. Meanwhile, it was October and the first rains had already started. I still made recordings in Mike’s studio. Mike wanted to record a new single for my record company in the Netherlands. During the day, I practiced the two songs we had chosen. One was a song by Mike entitled *I Wanna Be With You* and the other was a song I wrote called *The Wobble*. In the evening, I sat with Mike in his studio and we tried to record the songs. However, everything went wrong. There was a strange atmosphere of hatred and suspicion about our “village” project. When I visited Jan and discussed the situation with him, he began to explain what was happening to my village and “Mike the Bull”. My biggest mistake, he said, was that I had given everything out of my hands. As a result, Mike was able to do whatever he wanted and I could only watch helplessly how he abused my idea of the village for his own gain. No, this was not my way. Fortunately, a new way became visible for me. Kees had called from the Netherlands. I had known him from the time I worked at the hotline in Hilversum. We lost touch at times but we couldn’t really let go of each other. It would be twenty years before I would meet him again, and that was a good five months before I started my last trip. I felt like I needed him to put me back on the road. In the preparation of my last trip, he and his wife supported me. I often stayed at their big villa in Soestdijk which was near Soestdijk Palace. When we sat under a beautiful tree in his garden, I told them about my grand plans and also talked about death, which his wife invariably replied, “You’re not dead. You will be enlightened!” With that in mind, I promised them that I would stay in touch.

The winter was now approaching. The island began to quiet down and the restaurants, cafes, and hotels were boarded up. It gave the island the dreary sight of a ghost town. For most Greeks, the money had been made to survive the winter, but not for me. I didn’t even have enough money

to pay for a flight to the Netherlands. I therefore got back in touch with Kees who volunteered to send me money so I could buy a plane ticket. He also offered me a room in his home until I found my own living space. The money would be transferred to Mike and he would then give the money back to me. It took weeks before the money came. I thought that wasn't so bad but when it finally was in, Mike refused to hand me the money because of the high expenses of the recordings for me in his studio and as took it as a compensation for my first accommodation upon my arrival in Crete. No matter what I said to Mike, he remained adamant. With my last pennies in my pocket, I was in the basement of Hotel Buano when finally Mike came in with the money that Kees had sent me. He also handed me the recordings of two songs for my record company in the Netherlands. Without saying anything, he left while I called after him, "You are my brother no more!" referring to the title of my song *You Are My Brother*.

During those last days in Crete, I wrote a lot in my diary. I rode around on my moped to the places on the island that were dear to me like the dilapidated old church. Looking at the sky, I saw myself on the plane back to the Netherlands. Here in Crete, there would soon be thunder and lightning. I counted the last days, the last hours. A few times, I rode to Pikris and stayed there for hours looking down at Porta Pikris, Costa's tavern, and his wife who didn't like me. I wiped the tears from my face. I cried like a child who had lost his most prized possession. I cried for what had happened to me. I cried for the dream that had become a nightmare. I bid farewell to my village. Weeping, I rode back to Rethymno and found a travel agency where I could buy an airline ticket for the trip. Within a few days, I would fly back to the Netherlands. It was now November. I had to leave Crete with an almost empty suitcase, a guitar, and a book of memories. That was all that was left of my dream. However, my journey was almost complete. In the Netherlands, I would start with a clean slate and this time, I would hold the reins as Jan and Liza had advised.

An unspeakable force in and around us leads us to continue on our way like a river does to the great ocean of love. If we recognize this and allow this power into our lives, our own light will show us the way.

It connects us to the life around us. Call it God, Jesus, or Allah. That power of love brings us everything we need to accomplish our task—dropping who we think we are and being reborn. However, to climb the mountain, you must first pass through the valley and up the mountain, you will see the whole thing and understand why you had to fall before.

I said goodbye to Jan and Liza and got mixed feelings on the plane. During takeoff, it began to thunder above Heraklion when suddenly a beautiful rainbow appeared over the country. I saw this as a final farewell to the island. I had always found a rainbow as something of a miracle and at this precise moment, I felt complete.

Chapter 8

Coming Home (1997-1998)

81. KEES, SOEST

Upon arrival in the Netherlands, Kees was waiting for me. With an angry voice and angry face, he said, "Is this all you've got? Only one suitcase and a guitar?" I replied, "Yes, this is all." Blinded by jealousy, he didn't see the light I radiated, the light which he himself had sought in vain for so long. I smiled and could only laugh at his anger. He walked with a curved back as if he carried the world on his shoulders. His wife was not much better off, I saw. Together, they were weighed down by life. They basically had nothing. In their villa, they had no place for me and therefore, they put down a bed for me in their old stable. Kees had turned into a very hard man due to his thirty years of experience as a therapist and social worker. He never cried and everything was always rationalized away. Now, it was his turn and he fell heavily. As an experienced therapist, he always gave the ball back to me. I told him what had happened to me but he reacted fiercely with, "You are responsible for your own behavior." It was a yes-and-no game. Later that day, he came into the stable with a paper in his hand. It turned out to be an IOU for the money he had advanced for the trip. I did everything myself from now on. "From now on you better take care of yourself," he said. Then, he gave me a bucket to pee in because he didn't want me to do so in his house. It was already five degrees below zero. Before he left the stable, I gave him a stone that was very dear to me. It was a fragment from my beloved church in Crete where I went to meditate almost daily. He took it and said, "Yes, this is all we have in common." I was totally overwhelmed by his behavior. I stayed in the barn, looked through the windows across the lawn to his house, and felt a deep happiness in me. I was back in Soestdijk where I met my second wife in 1974. The circle was complete. I embarked on a long trip and had now returned to the place where it began. Suddenly, it all came back to me—the offices of my wife, our dog Kay with his disgusting smell, all the splendor of the

palace, and the military police, who at the gate saluted me when I drove by and showed my pass. It was all so unreal. I myself had always given accommodation selflessly to friends and strangers when they returned from their travels in France or India during the time of my meditation center in Baarn. For me, it was always a pleasure to meet them and share what we could share. Tired of it all, I lay down on my bed and pulled the covers far over me. For a moment, I just trusted what my heart would give me. One thing was clear—I couldn't stay here.

Despite the severe cold that night, I slept very well. The next morning, I wandered around uncomfortably in Soest and walked to the large villa on the Praam Canal where I was settled in 1975. I looked at the upstairs window and I saw myself at the kitchen table after being discharged from a facility in Australia. When I saw the villa, I felt a smile on my lips. Oh, I had changed a lot. I was grateful for what had happened to me after all my travels. I saw the horses graze in the pasture just as they did at that time. When I had returned from Australia, I experienced a huge culture shock. Now that I just returned from Crete, I felt the same shock. I walked around the corner and stopped in front of the palace. I looked at the left wing where my wife had her office next to that of the adjutant of the prince. Yes, those were different times. I looked up to the roof of the palace and saw that the flag was waving, which meant that the family was at home. It flashed through my head to ask Prince Bernhard if he could help me find accommodation but no, I didn't know him good enough. I walked along the stalls and the large villa which was behind the pool. One time, there was a gossip that we could live above the stables but that didn't happen. Lost in thought, I walked back to my own stable at Kees' villa. Ice was on the windows and the concrete floor multiplied the cold. Quickly, I lay under the covers. Kees brought over a tiny heater. He said, "If I have a client in my practice, I'll need it back." The next day, when I was emptying my bucket of piss outside, his wife watched me and saw how I washed myself with ice-cold water from the tap above the frozen pit. She took her stature and her wild gray hair reminded me of an evil witch from some storybook. It took some time until everything got through to me. First, I still hovered above the Earth. Now, after I was harshly given a chilly reception and cold conditions I

stood with both feet on the ground. That night, I slept like a baby with only one thought in my head, "Get out of here!" But where should I go?

That morning, I woke up and emptied my potty in front of their kitchen window. Kees saw me and offered me to shower inside. I accepted his proposal even if it was insincere. Oh, how wrong I was about that man. Why did I always trust the wrong people? Was I too silly or perhaps too gullible? At times like this, I even wondered why I actually went to the Netherlands. I had to survive again and it wasn't easy. I was now literally homeless, a man without a roof over his own head. Yes, the sky and the stars were my roof. I was detached from everything. I was still floating above the Earth in the light and felt so open, overflowing with love and creation. I was at the beginning of a new phase in my life. I had descended from my mountaintop and stood like an innocent child. I ran with tears in my eyes to the premises of the municipal social service of Soest and asked the clerk, "I'm homeless. Can you help me?" It was my first step on the road back to society, my return to the contact with reality. I was led to a separate room where I explained my whole story. "It'll be okay," said the man. He immediately began to make some calls while I wiped away my tears with the sleeve of my coat. After the employee put the phone down, he told me that there was a place for me in a homeless shelter for a few days and maybe longer. It was a start.

82. ROTONDE, AMERSFOORT

The shelter was called the Rotonde and stood in Amersfoort, another municipality. I could immediately go there. With that statement, I went back to the villa of Kees and Dita. I now had an alternative although I wasn't quite sure it was for the longer term. However, I didn't hesitate. I left the stable and went to the house. Kees opened the door and escorted me to the living room where I sat opposite them. I told him that I had found another place. That same afternoon, I said goodbye to the both of them. I felt a great strength in me, but also sadness. I doubted whether I would ask if he could take me with my suitcase and guitar to Rotonde because I didn't have money for the bus or a taxi. His wife was livid when I asked. It was quiet until Kees finally said, "Okay, let's go right now." I stood up, got my suitcase and guitar, and off we drove.

Twenty minutes later, Kees parked his Volvo in front of the Rotonde. "Shall I come in?" asked Kees. "No," I said, "I'll continue this journey alone." I got out and watched him as he drove away. I walked to the large porch and rang the bell. The door was opened. I was let in by someone with a heart full of love. I can't express it differently but I was in a very different world, a world I didn't know. To this day, I am grateful that I was able to stay in that world for a while. I met people there who, like me, were victims of their own dream. These were the people for whom I had designed my village in Greece. Now, I myself had become one of them, so a victim of my own dream, but with one difference—I felt like a victim but I wasn't unhappy. Full of admiration, I looked around and saw a world which I had become alienated to. I went there before when I was looking for an internship as a student social worker. The interview took place in the kitchen along with a few other helpers. My application was rejected because I wanted to work therapeutically. Now, I entered the same kitchen for the second time not as a future social worker, but as a "client".

The residents consisted of a dozen beautiful men, women, and children. I was one of them, no different and no better. I wasn't there with my background as a social worker. I was just their friend. What made an overwhelming impression on me was the kindness and compassion that I found there. I was called as a "client" in there but my heart overflowed with love and compassion. I couldn't be there and do nothing. I wanted to help these people who were ostracized by society. I remember that I often walked on the ramparts in Amsterdam years before. There was a tiny chapel for the homeless. I often went there and prayed with them. I experienced the same warmth and love but I was still too uncertain to say anything. I decided that I wanted to work for these people. In Australia when I was institutionalized, I also emerged as a kind of social worker. I was now on the other side of the coin, but was that true? Was there a difference? I had fallen into a sort of little village far away from the highway. It was all confined with all the lovely people, animals in a cage, and large lawns around. A man named Ruud, who in his old garb, did shopping for us and dragged around milk crates and God knows what else. He had a beard of wisdom and a smile on his face that I

recognized. He turned out to be one of the founders of the Rotonde and had already seen many come and go. The few permanent employees and about twenty volunteers formed the team that ensured everyone had shelter, felt at home, and from there, get their lives back on track. Here, I met counselors who really gave time to people and I was happy because I saw that it was real. Yes, I was happy and grateful at the same time. I was home, so I felt.

After an extensive interview, I was told that I was included in what was called a “crisis bed” for four days. After that, my situation would be reconsidered as there was a long waiting list. I got a small room to myself containing only an old bed with a sagging mattress. I was happy with it because it was warm and it was quite an improvement over Kees’ horse barn. For the next four days, I was fine. In the large living room where everyone walked in and out, there was a small television and in a kind of conservatory, there was a long dining table for up to fifteen people. The kitchen was very big and I soon learned that there were rotations in cooking and washing. Not only that, the residents had to clean the whole house. The first few days, I didn’t have to do anything yet. I observed this system and saw that it worked. Many aid workers who worked there were still in training and often came from afar. When I spoke with them, things felt instantly familiar.

Meanwhile, it was the end of November and the first days I used mainly to write and play guitar. A deep silence fell down on me when I looked out the windows to the driveway where a lot of people were coming and going. When the first four days had passed, I was told that I couldn’t stay there but a shelter in Utrecht probably had a place for me. That afternoon I told my story to three people again and explained why I was there. I said, “No, I’m not an alcoholic. No, I’m not crazy. No, I didn’t use drugs. I just have no roof over my head.” After the interviews, there appeared to be no room for me. I was again sent back to the Rotonde where they welcomed me back. They even had a meal ready for me. I was told they would see what they could do for me. In the meantime, I could stay in my room in the Rotonde which fortunately was still free. That day, I wandered around in the large villa. I felt so at home that I felt like I had never left. The group had diverse residents.

There were young people who had run away from home, women with children who fled from domestic violence, and men who were homeless and were hooked on alcohol or drugs. When I sat on the sofa in the large living room, I couldn't believe my eyes. Everything seemed like a movie. No, this was real. Soon, I met many wonderful people. I felt like I was in a big family. We were brought together by personal suffering but despite all this misery, we could dance, laugh, and be kind to one another. Okay, sometimes someone kicked things or threw something through the air out of anger. Okay, there were people who smoked cannabis which was allowed. Overall, there was a peaceful atmosphere. I went to help with the dishes in the kitchen. On the counter was a portable CD player, the volume of which was full. It played a kind of music that I had never heard of before, hip-hop and rap. During the washing and drying, we danced and I sang like old man with them. We just had some fun. Through the large window, we had a nice view of the trees and the big lawn. I imagined my village on Crete. Was it a coincidence that life had brought me here? No, I certainly wasn't unhappy. The house that I was looking for, I found in myself. It still felt like I was floating above the Earth and that I was still struggling to keep up. Slowly, I got on and looked around with the wonder and innocence of a child. I was so grateful for my life and what I had experienced. The nightmare was over and deep inside, I knew that my trip was almost over. Now, I had to look for a house, money, and work. However, I also wanted to share everything I had experienced with others. Didn't I promise that to my fellow residents when I left the establishment in Australia? Again, I saw my dozens of friends whom I left crying while I promised them that I would continue to write songs and poems. Now, it had been thirty years. What a journey I had made. It all seemed so unreal when I looked back.

That next morning, I would finally get to hear whether I could continue there or not. I always had everything in control and I could go wherever I wanted but here, I had to quietly wait and see what would happen. To kill time, I helped in the garden and in the kitchen. Actually, this group of people functioned as a small commune or ashram as I had experienced in India, but without a leader or guru. The other difference was that everything here was designed precisely to put you back into society as

soon as possible whether you liked it or not. Men who had wandered for years on the street got the chance to put their lives back on track here and live independently again whether or not through an intermediate step of assisted living. These assisted living projects also fell under the control of the Rotonde. The policy was that one couldn't exceed a maximum of three months in the Rotonde. Then, one had to get going or get assisted living. It was time for the meeting. Twenty counselors came together in a kind of wooden building behind the house. I watched them from the kitchen window. Anxiously, I waited until the group came back to the house after a few hours. Soon I was called into the office. I was told that I could stay until I could get assigned a home in Amersfoort. They said that given my age, they assured me that it wouldn't take long, maybe about three months. I also had to register with the municipality, the labor office, and the social service ASAP. For now, I would get pocket money once a week. The rest of the payment was for rent, food, and a small amount was withheld so that some money was available if I would leave the Rotonde and had to furnish my own home. I felt relieved and happy. There was no longer a heavy burden on my shoulders. For now, I could breathe with confidence. The next morning, I set off to register myself everywhere. The rest of that day, I was in my little room. I took some things out of my suitcase which I had brought from Crete, some shells and pebbles, and put them on the mantelpiece. The shells I took on the day before my departure. There was also the icon of St. George with the dragon which I had received from Jan and Liza. Later, I heard that St. George was also the symbol of the city of Amersfoort and that the little church that I often visited on Crete was also dedicated to him. Talk about coincidence. I sat down on my sagging bed, picked up my guitar, and started to sing, "*Softly sings a song in me*". I sang lustily and no one bothered to tell me to stop. Suddenly, I realized that I had two songs with me which I had made in Crete. I wanted to submit these songs to Edu Hasselt, the A & R manager who also released my first single.

In the kitchen, I quickly got into the division of labor. One of my tasks was handling breakfast which meant putting on the table covers and washing and cleaning the plates. I liked the work. In the middle of the kitchen was a large table where everyone could sit down and tell

his story over a cup of coffee or tea. In the evening, dinner was always done by someone else according to a strict schedule. My name was on it so I had to take care of dinner occasionally. Every day, I was in the kitchen and the rest of the time I spent in my room or in the large living room where I sang and wrote songs. I also kept myself busy with more practical matters such as signing up with the various bodies. I went out and strolled through Amersfoort which was a beautiful city with its very old streets, squares, bridges, and canals. It was where I felt right at home. The town immediately became quite cozy and inspired my poems.

Registering was a lot less poetic. I wasn't used to filling forms and I had no documents, data or evidence. Being a freebooter was a disaster. They didn't believe my story and behind every question, I felt they suspected that I was lying. I was about to walk away but I realized just in time that my stay in the Rotonde could be jeopardized. Eventually, I was able to register with the benefits agency. I couldn't sign up for housing because I had to pay a certain amount to enter the scheme. The fun day in Amersfoort eventually became stressful. Oh, the contact with benefit agencies had always been difficult for me. Ideally, I just went abroad to sing but I was at the end of my rope. My trip was over and I knew there was no other way at this time. I bought a pair of heavy boots at a thrift store and walked to the Rotonde. Once inside, I was called into the office where they asked me how things went. I told them the whole story and just went back to my daily routine. Soon, I prepared for dinner by doing seven pounds of potato peelings, roasted fourteen chops, boiled some vegetables, opened some soup cans, and put custard in bowls. I soon realized that my cooking was liked by the young residents especially the roasted meat. It was a nice sight when I saw them eating as one big family at the table. A prayer was said and then the pots and pans went from left to right and across the table. I don't know why, but I always got a place at the head of the table. There, I sat with my heavy hiking boots and enjoyed the meal while in the background played the radio hit of the Venga Boys called *Danski*. Upon hearing the music, I decided to see if something similar could happen to my recordings. I planned to contact my A & R manager the next day.

The next day, I woke up early to prepare breakfast. I made a large pot of coffee and sat down at the big table. After I washed the dishes and the kitchen was cleared, I got on the bus to Hilversum. I hoped they would find my new song good enough for a single release. They heard the demo and liked it. Now, they wanted the song re-recorded with a choir. Maybe I could get advance just like my first single from Mike. That was 1,000 guilders and I could save it for the time being because I was homeless. Meanwhile, I stepped out of the bus in front of the villa of Red Bullet. Through the windows, I saw director Willem van Kooten behind his large desk. He was the big man in the record business and had made it all the way. No, I didn't want to see him personally. At the reception, I was asked to walk upstairs to the office of Edu Hasselt, my A & R manager. What had been off limits to me once, I was able to freely enter now. That gave me a special feeling of victory. It was exciting because a single could catch on and in an instant, you were like a world star. I got that feeling even though I was homeless and even if my first single flopped at the charts. They didn't mind because it fitted in with their philosophy—releasing a lot and hoping that there was a real hit in between.

Once inside the office, I took my place across Edu. I immediately felt very welcome. He asked me how I was doing. I told him casually that I was homeless and he took it very ordinarily. We also talked a bit about Crete and the sale of my single which sold well at my gigs. I took the CD out of my pocket which Mike had produced for me. I gave it to Edu who popped it into the CD player immediately. It was a very exciting moment. A lot depended on it. I looked at his face and his eyes. He continued to listen to the end of the song and a smile appeared on his face. I thought, "This is my new single." He took out the CD, looked at me, and said, "*The Wobble* is very good. I'll be back." He walked down to someone I didn't know. Perhaps he was William's son. When he came back, he told me that I had to come back in a week. I immediately thought, "Oh dear, not that!" He looked at me intently and said, "You have to get rid of that Swiss." I stammered a bit and said, "Mike is a German," to which Edu said, "That man is not good. Find another producer." He was right. I knew it myself but I kept my mouth shut. After we said our goodbyes, I took the bus back to that other world, the world of the homeless. It

was my turn to cook that day. I made fifteen meatballs, pea soup from a can, potatoes, and green beans. Upon my return, they asked me what had happened. I casually said, "Oh, I have to go back in a week," and started cooking. Deep inside, I knew that the Netherlands would never hear *The Wobble*.

The next day, I got up early as usual. That morning was wonderfully quiet and sitting on my bed with pen and paper at the ready, I grabbed my guitar, my old friend whom I had never learned to play well but who had been always good to me. The tuning of the strings and difficult chords, especially the barre chords, I had never mastered. Maybe it was because I wanted to keep everything as simple as possible. I always wrote from the heart without thinking about the spelling of the words. Sometimes, it was too easy. Yes, simplicity fit well with me. The day after, I strummed my guitar every day. There was a certain atmosphere in the house. It was now December. Another couple of weeks and it would be Christmas. I was pretty calm in the Rotonde. I had my own duties in the house such as cleaning and cooking. Sometimes I did it alone and sometimes, I did it together with the other residents. The Rotonde was a halfway house. Everyone who came had to leave within three months. For me, it was also the time to look for my own home. Before that, I had register with the housing association. First, I had to stop by the employment office. Oh, I hated that but I was trapped in the spokes of the wheel. I had to rotate with it whether I liked it or not. However, this time I got a completely different person. It was a young woman who saw through me. I immediately felt comfortable with her. She assured me that I could continue to do what I wanted and that was to write and sing. With that statement, I was overjoyed. At the housing association, I was told that because of my age, I didn't have to wait long for a home. Walking back through the streets of Amersfoort, I felt that my journey was almost complete. Once I turned the key in the lock of my new home, that would be the end of my trip. It was a journey of a fall and rise but always with the presence of light and love. There was always an angel on my shoulder. It was a journey full of fear and trembling and with the hopeless feeling of drowning or dying.

No, there is nothing new in what I'm saying or writing. It is centuries old. It is hidden in the soul of every human where it waits until it manifests in our higher consciousness. It is the ultimate universal gift to every man. The truth is present in all of us. You can't see it but deep down, you can experience it! No, it's not news what I'm telling you. It is the record of a man who had traveled on the difficult path called life.

It was funny how the mood in the house could change when the doorbell rang suddenly. One evening at eight in the evening while it was freezing outside, a group of homeless people came and asked if they could spend the night in the Rotonde. Because there was no place for them, they were housed in a wooden building on the property. There, emergency beds were used and they were told that they were allowed to sleep there on the condition that they would leave early the next morning. During the day, they walked on the streets or they sat in the Walk, a shelter in the city where they could stay from ten in the morning until four o'clock in the afternoon. If they were lucky, they were given a three-month stay in the Rotonde. However, many didn't even want that and preferred a life on the streets as a vagrant. They refused to adapt to civilian life. They were allergic to the power of the workers and I could understand that. I also had turned away from normal life and wandered around. But now, I had given in to the whims and laws of the aid and that suited my situation now. I had returned to myself after a long journey. I was lucky. The employee at the social services office told me that I didn't have to apply or look for work. I could continue my life as a songwriter and performing artist in the Netherlands because I was registered as an artist. I saw it as recognition of my work. The municipality provided the money but there was a price tag attached to it. I just had to report to the social services regularly. That was required if I wanted a house. Because I had worked as a counselor myself, I knew what interviews entailed and now, I sat myself on the other side of the table. I preferred to be completely independent as I had always been. However, the game was played hard and in fact, I had no choice. At the first interview, I was welcomed by a very friendly woman of Turkish origin who introduced herself as a therapeutic social worker. With her big, brown eyes, she studied me from head to toe. After a cup of coffee, she talked about the

house and summed up what the charges were. I was beaten with wonder and found that they totally misunderstood the situation. She wouldn't listen to my side of the story. Apparently, she never checked if they had things right. She kept on rattling. I was angry, stood up, and walked to the door. I turned and said, "You should go back to school so you'll learn to treat people well," and closed the door behind me. With that thought, I stomped my heavy boots on the ground even harder while I walked back to the Rotonde. Once back at the Rotonde, I got scolded. At first, she didn't know what to make of me. She said I had to go back to the social worker but I refused. After a few days, two rescuers came to visit me. They told me that I had to immediately return to the social services for a new appointment. Otherwise, I would have to leave the Rotunda, winter or no winter. I protested and criticized their behavior but they maintained their position. I call for a new appointment anyway. This time, the social worker sounded very friendly on the phone. When I came back to her office, she sat across me. She admitted that I was right. Slowly, a mutual understanding developed between us. I often went to her house and I was always offered coffee and a biscuit. We talked about anything under the sun. I began to appreciate her more and got to know her better. Our bond was more personal and she invited me occasionally to eat pizza or drink coffee somewhere. Instead of a conversation in the office, sometimes we went to a flea market. It was without any ulterior motive and that made me feel good. This way, I came in contact with ordinary life in the Netherlands. She had a remarkable gift of observation. One day, she looked at me with her piercing brown eyes and asked me point blank, "Luka, are you enlightened?" I avoided her direct question and replied, "Every man is enlightened," to which she said again, "Yes, you are too clever to saying 'yes'." She was right.

In the Rotonde lived Monica, a young woman with three children, who was pregnant. She had her heart in the right place but the words she spoke were words that you couldn't find in a thick dictionary. She had a son named Sven who was increasingly unpopular with the other residents. There was a real smear campaign against him which only became worse. It made Monica even more aggressive. Smoking and swearing, she came down the steps and went to dinner while the children

were always in the kitchen. One day, I asked the management if I could take a walk in the woods with Sven. Every single day, I hoped that Sven would see me as a father figure. First, we always went to the gas station to buy some candy. In the forest, there was a mystical atmosphere among the trees and we pretended we were gnomes. I showed him old trunks which had nice shapes. He quickly got a whole collection of leaves, old stumps, and branches. We both enjoyed our outings. I felt my father's heartbeat and he saw in me a friend and a playmate that could also play the guitar and write lyrics about him like, "*Sven, do you know who I am? I'm your leprechaun in the night, always laughing at you.*" Little by little, he calmed down. I gave Sven a different kind of attention. I gave him the love he yearned for. With much love, I look back on those walks through the woods with Sven. We felt so connected to each other as if our hearts were one. I understood him so well. He always argued with his child's heart. It felt like an honor for me.

Meanwhile, it was already Christmas. I still wasn't able to find my own property. I was still only second or third on the list. On Christmas Eve, I recited some poems and prose in the Rotonde and I told a funny story about how a counselor talks and reacts in an interview. On Christmas itself, I was almost the only occupant in the Rotonde. Then, the phone in the hall rang. Suddenly, I heard someone call my name, "Luka, there's a call for you!" It scared me wild because no one knew I was here. I walked into the hallway and picked up the phone. It was Kees, Mr. Psychotherapist himself, who invited me to dinner at his home. I firmly replied, "No, I'm not in the mood. Here lives and works a very different kind of person." He asked, "What do you mean?" I said again, "You heard what I said." He replied, "Well, if you change your mind, let me know." I said, "No, I'm not changing my mind," and hung up. I walked back to the living room and looked at the large Christmas tree standing there showing off all of its lights. Then, I looked through the window and thought, "Everything passes." That was good but also difficult and often painful in life. Life is letting go—you can do it yourself but if you don't dare to do so, it will be done for you.

The last day of the year had arrived. I walked through the city and smelled the donuts and apple turnovers. People with bags full of goodies

and drinks hurried past me. It was a special day. There were not many people at the Rotonde. They went somewhere else to celebrate New Year's Eve. There was an exciting atmosphere at home. I looked at the roster. The person in charge of the kitchen turned out to be Martin. He was one of my favorites. He was a religious man, a Christian, but so different, so without judgment, and so full of love for his fellow man. When I looked at him, he always reminded me of saint Peter or John. He could be an apostle and it was nice to see how we were all together at the big table that night. It looked like a painting of the Last Supper. "Everything passes," said a voice deep inside me. When Martin pressed the last drops of custard from the suit, he said, "Look, this is a student's trick." He folded the suit so that even the last drop of custard came out. I looked at it with amazement and saw that he was right. Such is life. You think you've taken everything out but there's still something left. Outside in the cold, the trees stood in a circle around us as if Mother Nature wanted to protect us.

I loved the trees as I also loved the stars, the sun, and the moon. For the first time, I loved myself again that was quite different. I looked at the clock. It was almost midnight. I looked at Martin and he looked back at me. I asked him if he wanted to go with me to the woods to leave the old year behind. "Of course," I heard him say. Together, we went outside and walked towards the forest. We found a nice spot on a small hill and looked deep into each other eyes. Without saying a word, we understood each other. We looked into the dark night and waited for what was to come. In the distance was the city and soon, we saw one skyrocket after another. The sky was a sea of light in a variety of brilliant colors. When the fireworks ended, we walked back to the house. The world seemed so different and we felt so blessed, so blessed. Upon our return, we heard that many other people had gone out. One resident sat among the goats to celebrate the new year. I found it a beautiful, original way and I didn't think many people came up with that idea.

I had spent three months in the Rotonde. I was cooking in the kitchen when Ruud came to me and said, "It just won't work eh, your house?" I said, "No. Every time, I'm just second or third." He said, "We discussed your case in the meeting and decided to give you a room in one of our

cottages called Fideliohof.” I looked at him with sad eyes. I said, “But this is my home.” Ruud said, “It is better for you and we need to make room for more serious and urgent cases.” That last remark gave me the key. “Yes, of course, Ruud. Of course,” I replied.

In the next few days, I should move to Fideliohof. With such a name I fancied it had a cute courtyard and was located in a nice area somewhere in the middle of nature. When I arrived with a volunteer at the relevant address, I found a big block of flats. We had to climb the stairs to the fourth floor because the elevator was broken. Once inside my room, I got the fright of my life. There was a big, dirty mess. Everything was broken and dirty. There were bicycles and bicycle parts in the living room. The sofa, that was not so old, was too dirty to sit on. The kitchen didn't look pleasing as everything was dirty and greasy. There was a mountain of unwashed dishes, piled cups, and pots and pans. I really wanted to run out of the room but because I was with the volunteer, I couldn't. I held back and just played the game. Everything looked old and rotted out. The house showed no self-esteem and I immediately thought, “How did the people who lived here interact respectfully with each other?” Another resident walked up to me and asked if I had a cigarette for him. When a cabinet door was opened, dirty clothes were in it. I didn't even look and just wanted to throw them away. This was, after my stay at the Rotonde which was beautifully located in the woods, the worst thing that could happen to me. I was really angry. When I ran down with the volunteer and we drove back to the Rotonde, I couldn't keep my anger and spat my grievances. Back at the Rotonde, I immediately filed a complaint. My complaint was investigated and honored. The property must first be restored at some points. I had to act quickly because I only had one week to go at the Rotonde. I got a bucket of paint and some money for the bus. Together with one of the volunteers I went to the new house. The volunteer helped me a lot. I immediately started to clear the mess. It took us a few days to do. Every day, we took the bus back and forth. It was a hassle and it made me quite nervous. I tried to stay in balance and transform it into a positive experience. While I smeared the paint on the walls, I asked myself why all of this happened and why didn't I just go abroad like the other times? What kept me back this time? Was this

really the last part of my trip? I had already come home and now, I had to adjust accordingly. I looked at myself and saw an ordinary man with a paintbrush in his hand. Deep inside, it felt good.

It was time to pack my things. A real goodbye wasn't there. Everyone wished me good luck, but they also knew that I left the Rotonde with great reluctance. When one of the helpers suddenly grabbed my suitcase and guitar, something snapped in me. I looked at him and saw myself looking in a mirror. So, this was what I had always looked like when I was traveling. He carried my stuff to the car. Three months ago, I was in love with the Rotonde. I had danced, sung and written songs, and also cooked and cleaned. Now, I was on my way to an apartment that I had to share with three other residents. Who would have thought? When would I finally get the key to that house with the garden? I felt that I was at the end of my trip. I felt like Jesus on the cross who cried to the Father, "Father, let this cup pass me by." I had no choice. I got in and without a backward glance, we drove off.

Once in the apartment, I plopped down on my new bed and looked around my newly painted room. It was a small room and in the common kitchen, it was still a big, dirty mess. I had no need for contact with the other three occupants who always knocked on my door asking for a cigarette. In the room next to mine, somebody played music that I didn't want to hear. I didn't think of going to the toilet because it looked like someone had lost control of his sphincter. On one hand, I had understanding and compassion for these people but on the other hand, I was also aware of all the smoke and negativity around me. I heard that there lived a man who played the violin. I thought it would be fun to meet him. Perhaps we could make music together. My curiosity was aroused. When I met him the next day and heard him play, it made me think of the Jostiband,—a musical group for mentally disabled people—so the party was canceled. That first night, I slept on my new bed in my new room. The next morning, I poured in some coffee for myself in the dirty kitchen and took the cup to my room. When I came back to pour a second cup, the pot was empty. I put a new pot of coffee and started the big cleanup in the kitchen. All the plates, cups, dishes and pans, I cleaned with an abrasive sheet. I sorted everything and put them

in the kitchen cupboards. It all looked clean and tidy again. However, when I came back to the kitchen the next day, I saw that everything was just as dirty and nasty. I walked back to my room, closed the door, and explained to myself what the situation was. Spring was at the door and I longed to sit outside. I couldn't. I still didn't own a house and going abroad was not an option. There was no alternative but to stay where I was and just wait for the house with the garden.

Every week, I got a list from the housing association of which I could choose between three houses. This time, in addition to a large number of flats, there were a few houses with a garden. As I stood there and the employee was trying to find my information in the computer, she suddenly looked at me and said, "But sir, you have already been assigned a home." I was stiff with fright. "What did you say?" I said. "Look," she said, "a small house with a garden." I didn't know that. I almost wanted to protest because it was all just too fast. I got the same information from another housing association. As fast as I could, I went with the necessary papers to the other housing association. Saying "yes" meant the end of my trip.

A wanderer can feel at home somewhere even though he has no home. It is about the journey with no destination and no purpose that is timeless as the clouds that float by. In our society, it is difficult, if not impossible, to let go of everything and follow the trail. Each of us will have our own path. Do not expect much understanding from others on the road but be happy with every encounter. Again, I think of the lovely people I left behind in Riverton Country House in Australia. Many will not be there but for them, I fulfilled my promise to put my findings in writing. Only when you are not looking will you find. Surrender to the trees and the flowers in the meadow. Above all, give in to yourself, to your inner child. Let the singing and dancing happen and look at everything that is dear to you. Live in the moment and let the tears flow in your heart. Sometimes, we just need a little push and pills can help you temporarily until you learn to walk again. Sometimes, good therapy can help you until you're done with letting go. Don't drown in drinking or don't lose yourself to drugs. Find the power within yourself and you will truly be forever "drunk" of something immeasurable.

I walked down the street that was on the form. I saw the small trees and lawns of the houses. There was a small lane which led to Number 26A. It looked nice. For a moment, I looked around before I put the key in the lock. After all, I knew what this would mean. Without further thought, I turned the key and opened the door. A friendly voice said, "Welcome home!"

Epilogue

When I wrote this in 2010, it had been about 13 years since I made my last trip to Crete. Looking back on my life, I see a clear thread. Or is it a silver thread? I let myself float on the wind of life and existence has driven me through trial and error. Sometimes, when it all became too much for me, I asked myself where I was and what I was doing. This insight gave me the courage and confidence to go on the road to the abyss of life to find my true self. It was as if God extended his hand to me and shouted, "Trust me and make that final step." I grabbed His hand and confidently, I took the plunge and lost everything to win everything. From one moment to the next, I came home and did nothing. From that moment, I lived in the moment knowing that tomorrow doesn't exist and that hope is only an illusion. Yes, the price is high because you have to give everything to win it all and find inner peace. On that last night in Crete, I just wanted to lie on the beach, sleep under a tree, and pick fruit to survive. However, I had to learn that the road keeps going and that I had to return to society. I have taken those steps. Now, I don't need anything more. I don't have to go on a trip. Every day when the weather permits, I ride my bike along ditches and the surrounding meadows. I take more or less the same route every time it appears new to me. I don't go on if I should compel myself to do so. I feel like a blessed man in the midst of his fellowmen and that the road has just been found.

I live and let things happen. I share my world, my creations, my songs, my voice and my books with the world. Sometimes, I hear the call of my beloved island of Santorini and ask myself whether it is time to go back. Then again, I feel that outstretched hand but I don't grab it. Time has passed me by and I'm so old. In a little while, I will no longer be on this earth. I am grateful for life and I want to give back to it which is not easy sometimes. Yes, since my return to the Netherlands, I have intensively tried to contact my children. When it finally worked, it felt like coming home. Plans were made to visit them but it was not to be. The desire for more contact and communication appeared until the e-mail traffic finally ceased. The contact with my son Daniel in Germany was initially

good. He and his mother came regularly to the Netherlands and we felt so good together. Yet, the distance and the issues surrounding his upbringing also diluted this contact, although I still have high hopes that this will be restored in the future. Yes of course, I miss them. However, the loss no longer has room for other things such as this book.

This book is not just a book. It's the story of my life as I have lived it. It's not the words that matter but the story and meaning behind the words. I hope that some will recognize themselves in my story. Never forget—Nobody is his tears, nobody is his sorrow, nobody is his emptiness and loss. Be aware of what you are doing and it will do you good. It will teach you what love, compassion, and enlightenment is. It is the way which is open to everyone as soon as you yourself become open to it. Give yourself to the beauty of life and love for in it, you'll find everything you need. Love fills you with grace. Love knows no boundaries and knows no color. Love, you can't possess. It's just there for you, for me, for everyone, because our true face is love. It is God's grace. It is a blessing from above.

Yes, I have undergone a great change since I came home. I fill my days with my web tracking, singing and making songs—some with deep messages, the others funny—and I drive to a flea market or a thrift store where the past is waiting for a rebirth at a time when someone picks it up and gives it new value and meaning. A new beginning, a new life. Just like us, this time can be anytime. Let this be the moment now. We are worth it.

Luka van den Driesschen



MY FATHER AND MOTHER



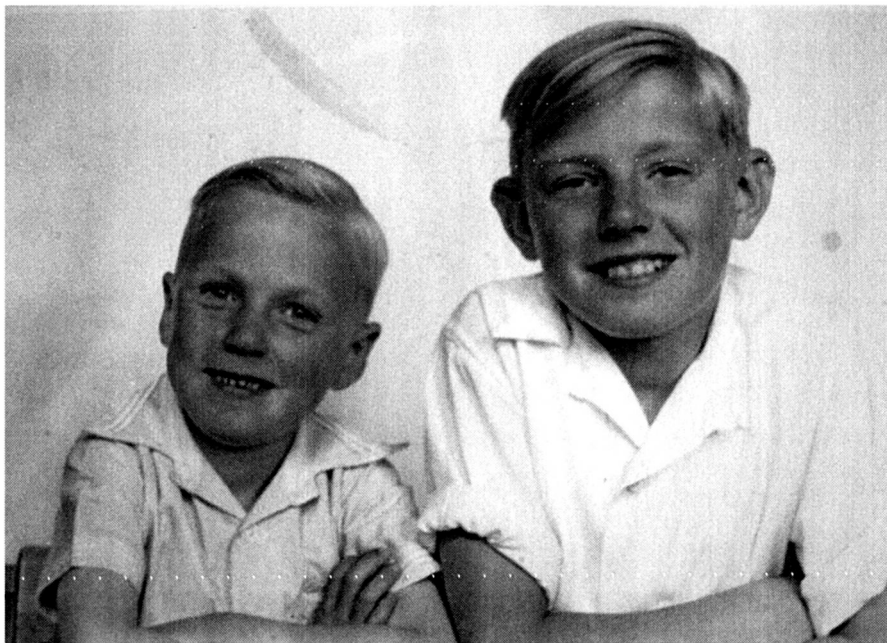
MY FATHER



MY MOTHER AND US IN THE BLASIUSSTREET AMSTERDAM



ME IN SCHOOL



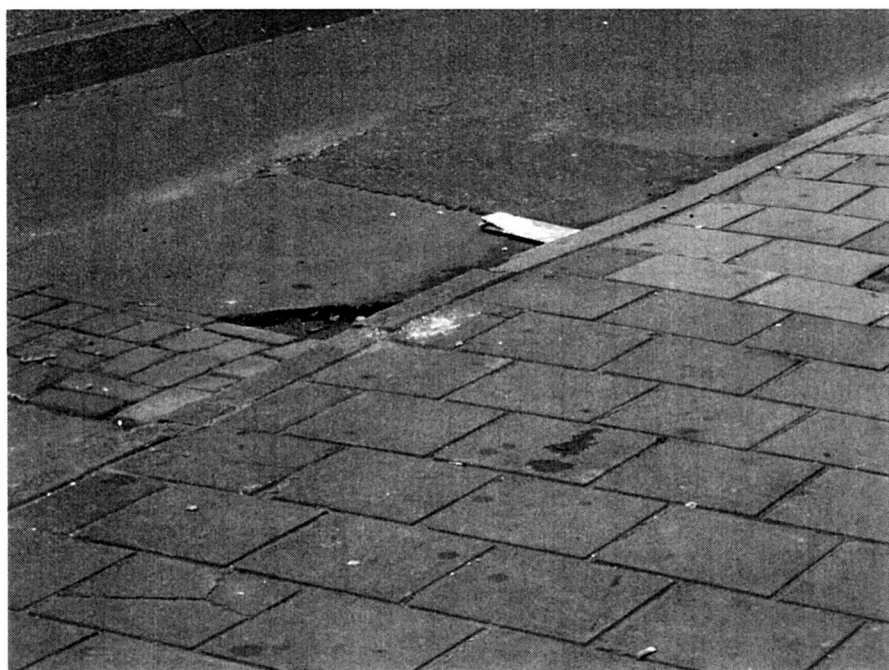
MY BROTHER AND ME



A OTHER SCHOOL FOTO SECOND FROM THE LEFT



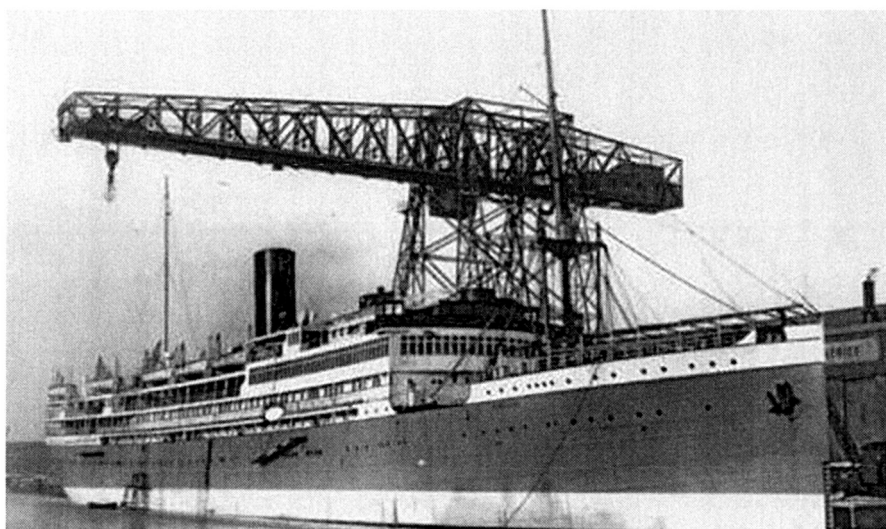
THE RUYSTREET WHERE MY FIRST GIRLFRIEND HAS DIED



THE PLACE WHERE SHE DIED



OUR LAST ADDRESS BEFORE MIGRATING TO AUSTRALIA



THE SIBAKAK TAKING US TO AUSTRALIA ON HIS LAST TRIP



ARRIVEL IN AUSTRALIA MY YOUNGER SISTER AND MOTHER



MY MOTHER WITH HER NEW FRIDGE



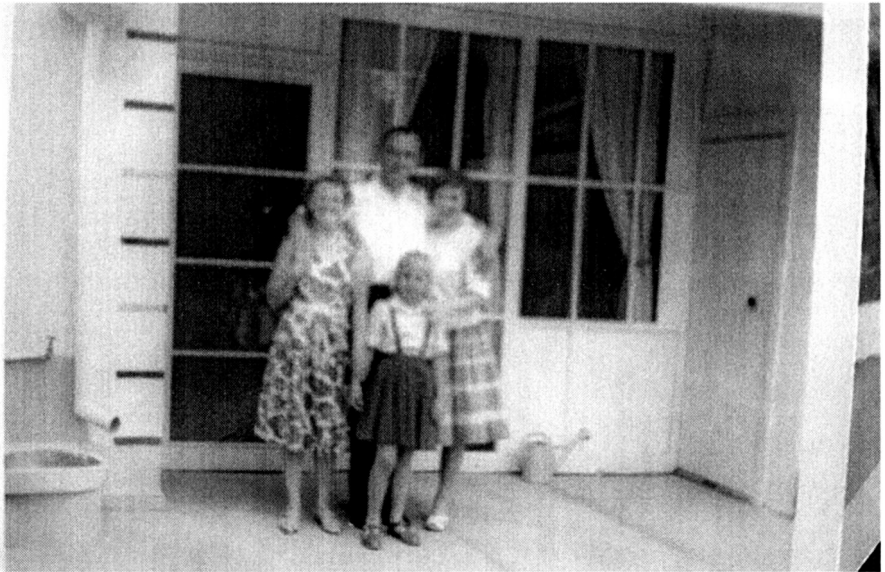
MY FATHER ON HIS NEW BIKE



MOTHER BETWEEN THE TREES



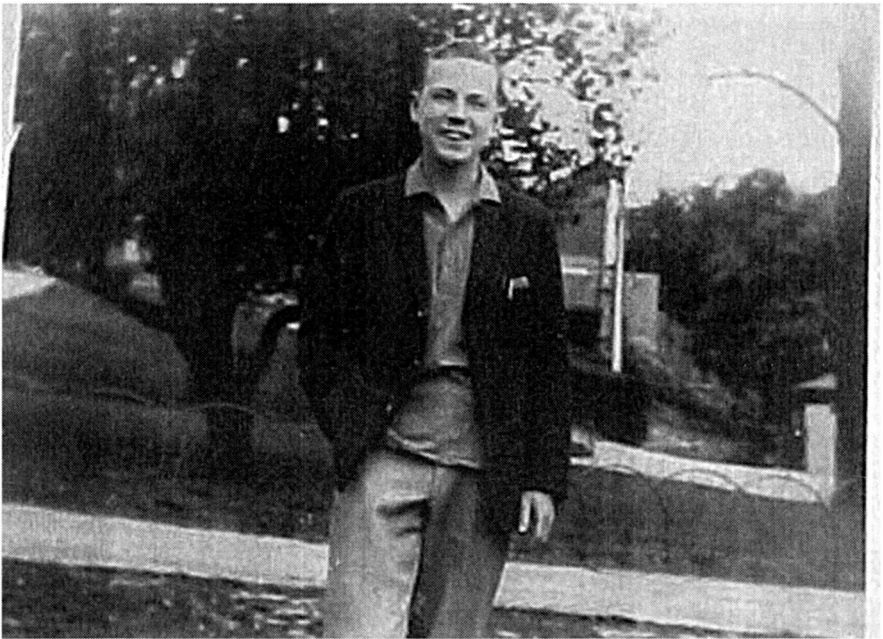
THE LAST DAYS OF MY FATHER AUSTRALIA



THE LAST DAYS OF THE FAMILY IN AUSTRALIA I TOKE THE PHOTO



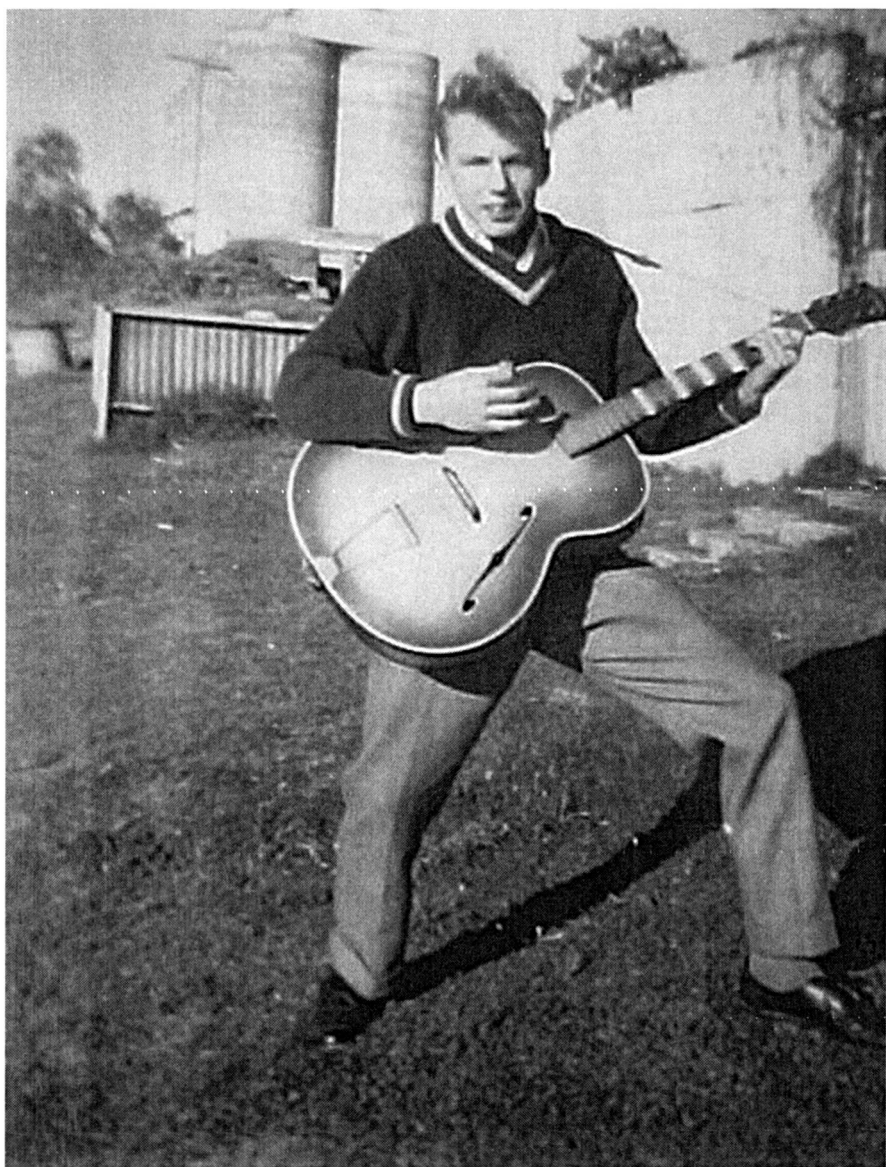
WORKING IN THE ICE SALON WITH BRUNO



PORT LINCOLN 1960



PORT LINCOLN



ME THINKING I AM ELVIS IN PORT LINCOLN



LOVING THE LOCAL WOMEN



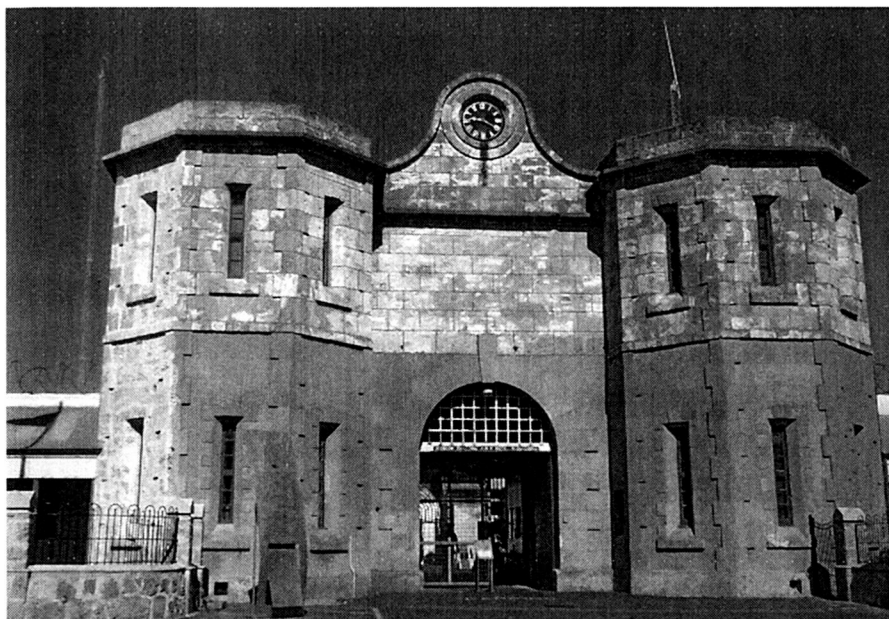
MY SISTER LOES NOW IN PORT LINCOLN



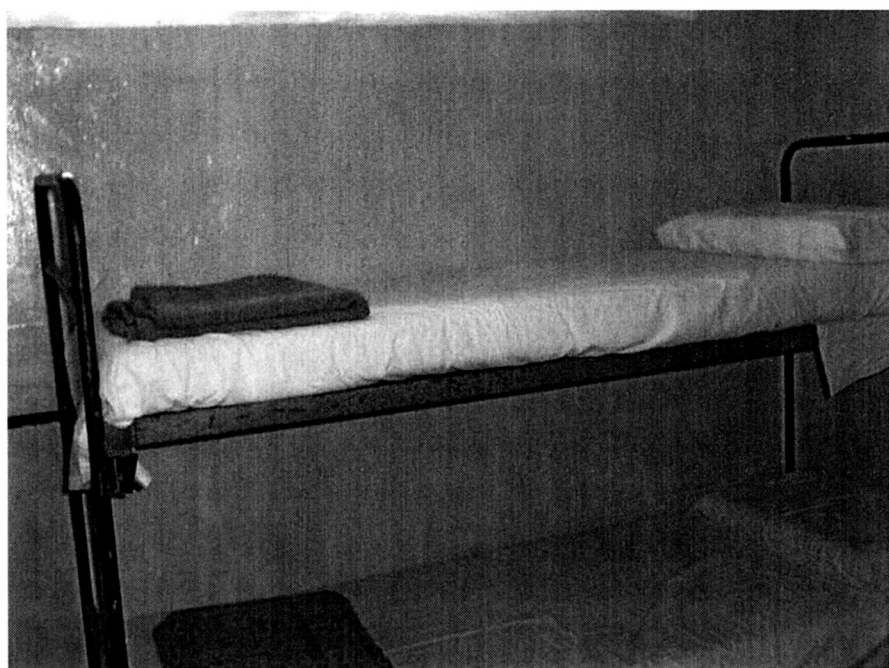
DREAMING OF MY DORUS TOM MANDER



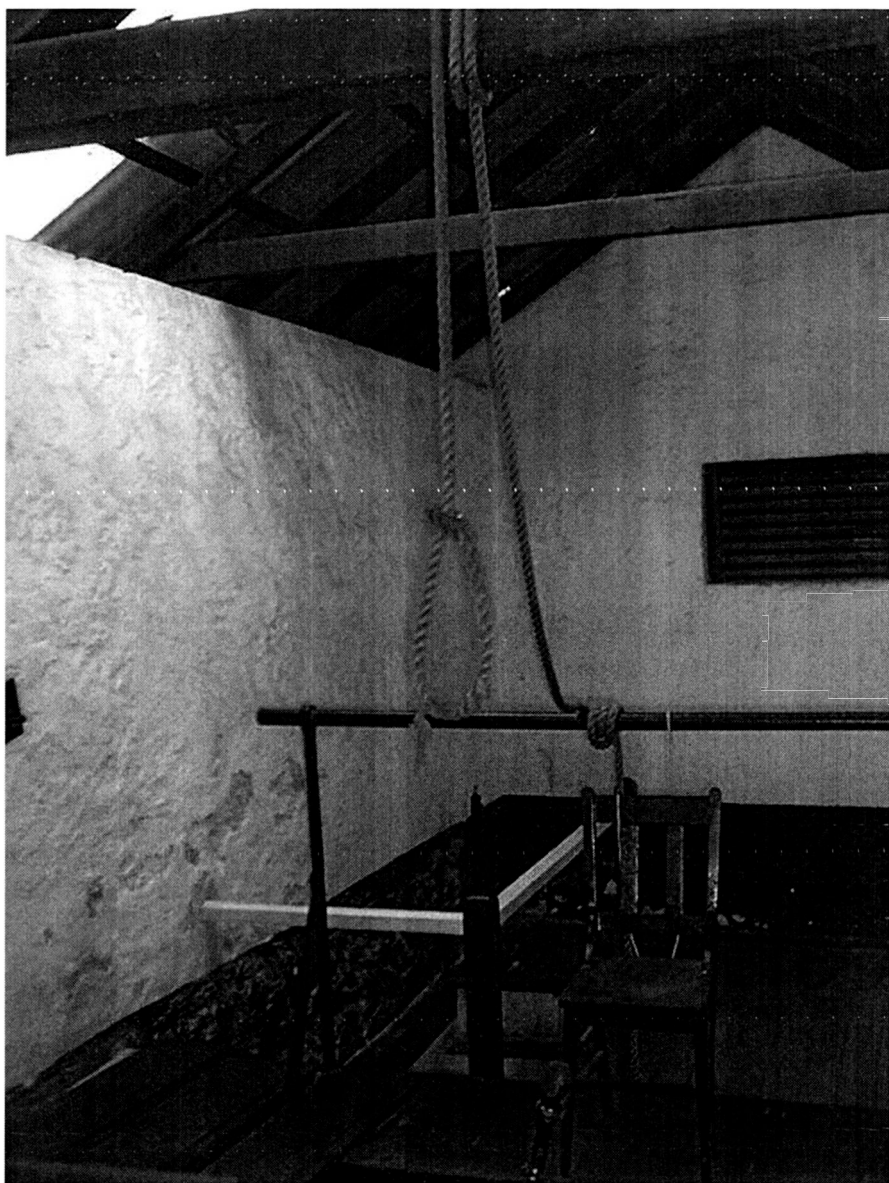
WORKING ON THE RAIL ROAD MOUNT TOM PRICE WESTERN AUSTRALIA



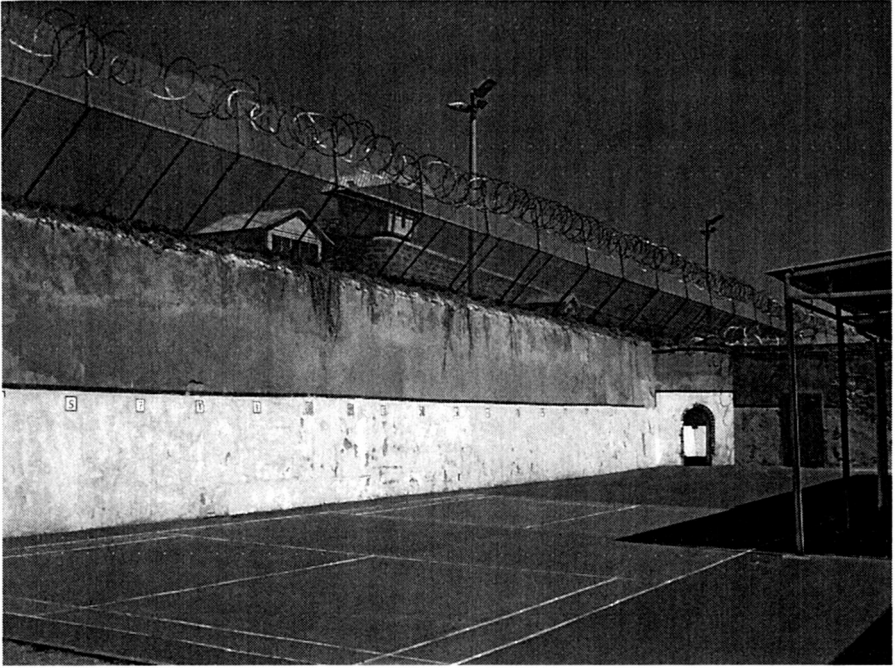
FREMANTLE PRISON



FREMANTLE PRISON MY BED



THE HANGING PLACE IN FREEMANTLE PRISON



THE REMAND YARD



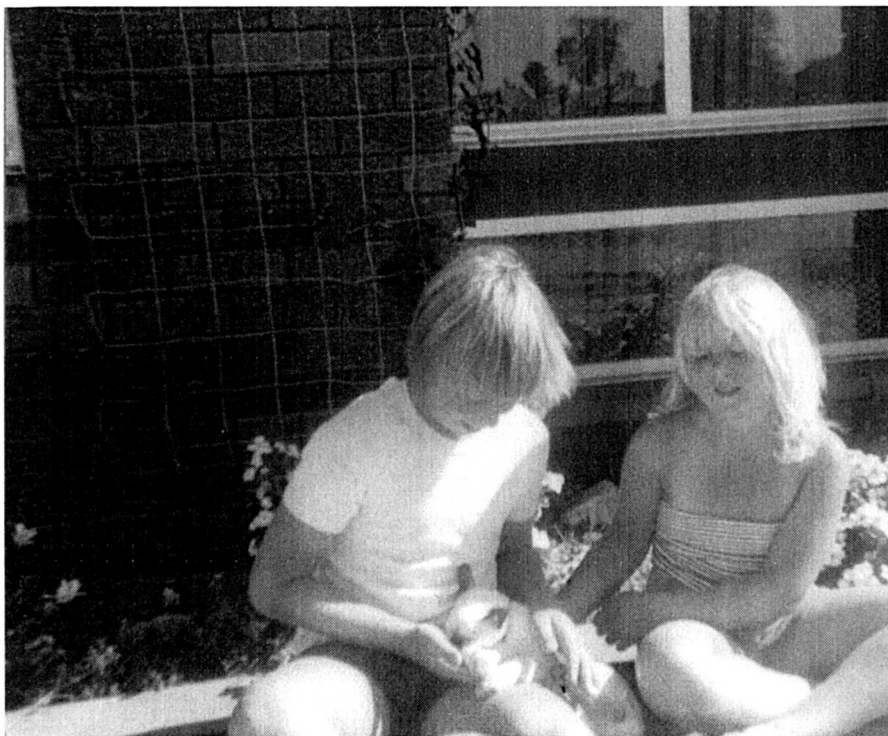
AS LUKE DIXIE ROUND 18 YEARS OLD



IN PERTH PLAYHOUSE AS A ACTOR



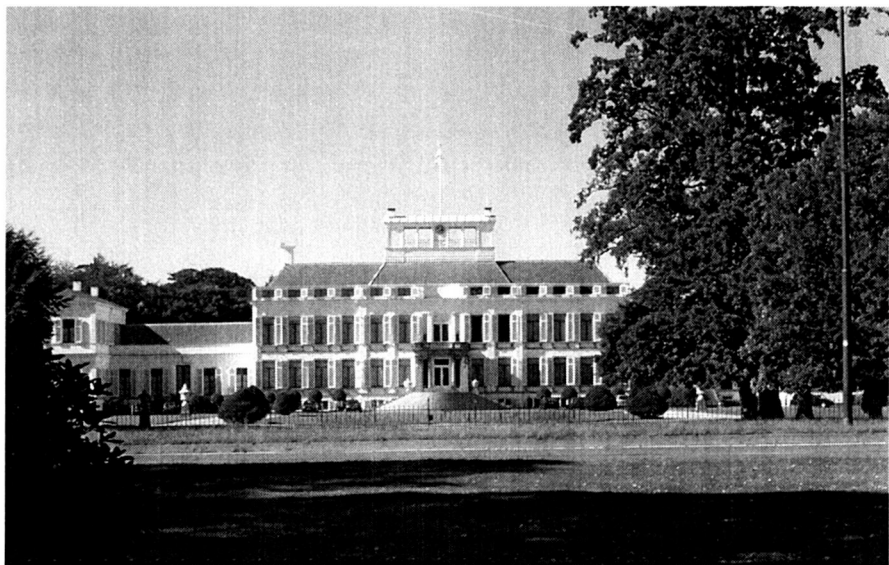
DAVID HELF GOTT



ANITA AND MILTON MY CHILDREN



ANITA WITH HER HUSBAND SCHOTT AND CHILDREN



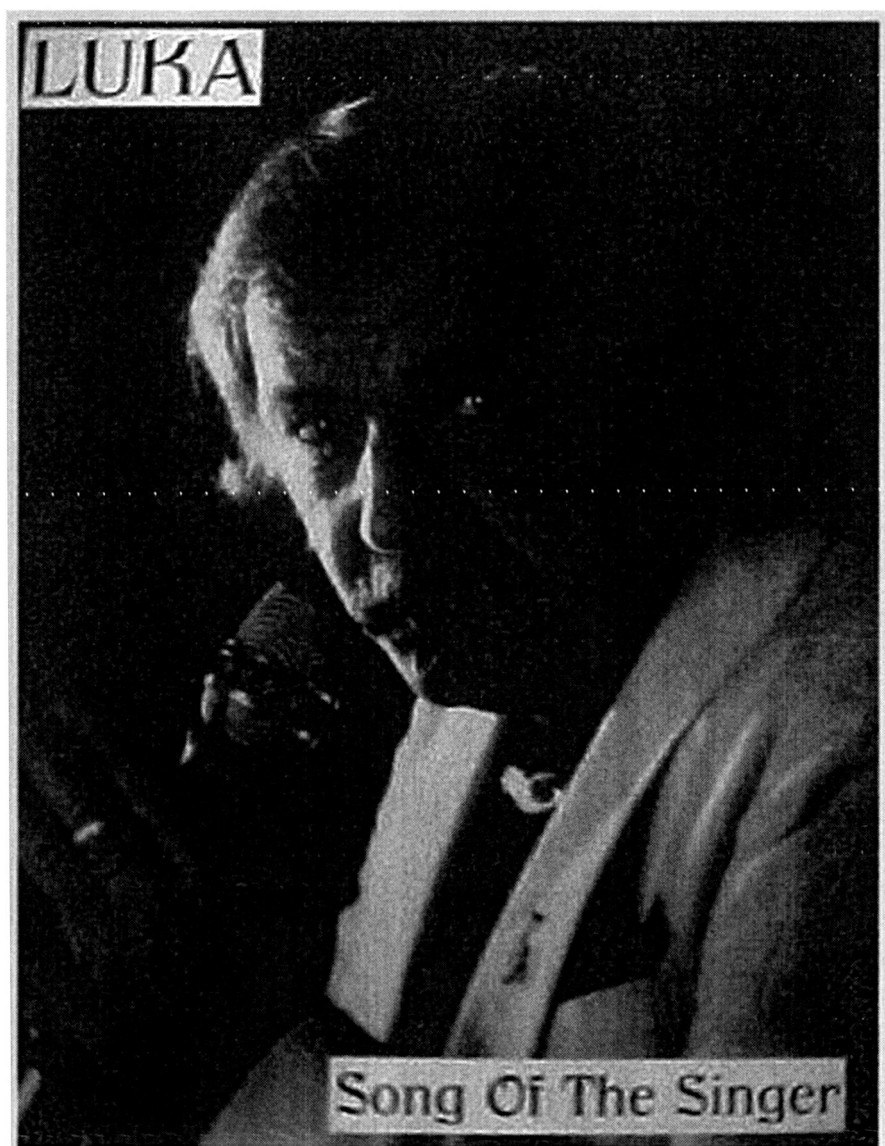
PALACE SOESTDIJK



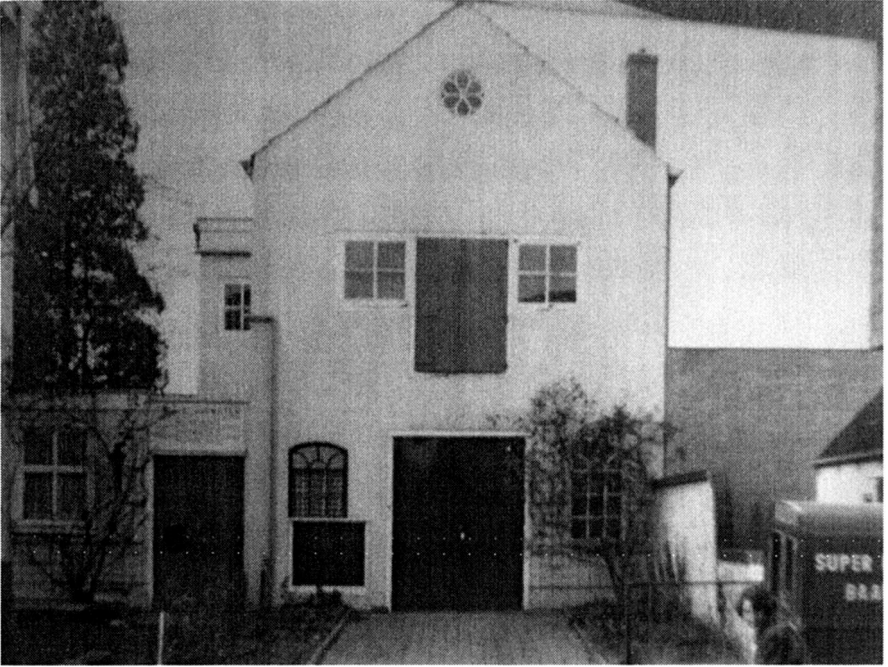
THE PRINCE AND THE QUEEN



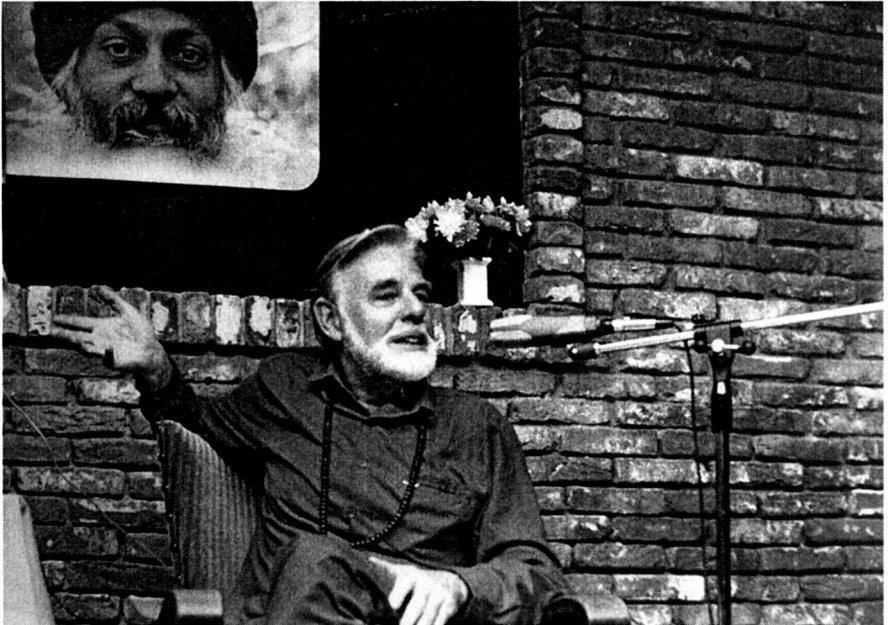
ME GETTING MARRIED IN HOLLAND



IN THE WORLD AS A SINGER SONG WRITER



OUR CENTRUM



JAN FODRAINE



IN INDIA PUNE 1990



SING SING SING



DAGMAR AND MY SON DANIEL IN GERMANY



ANAND AND ME ON CRETE



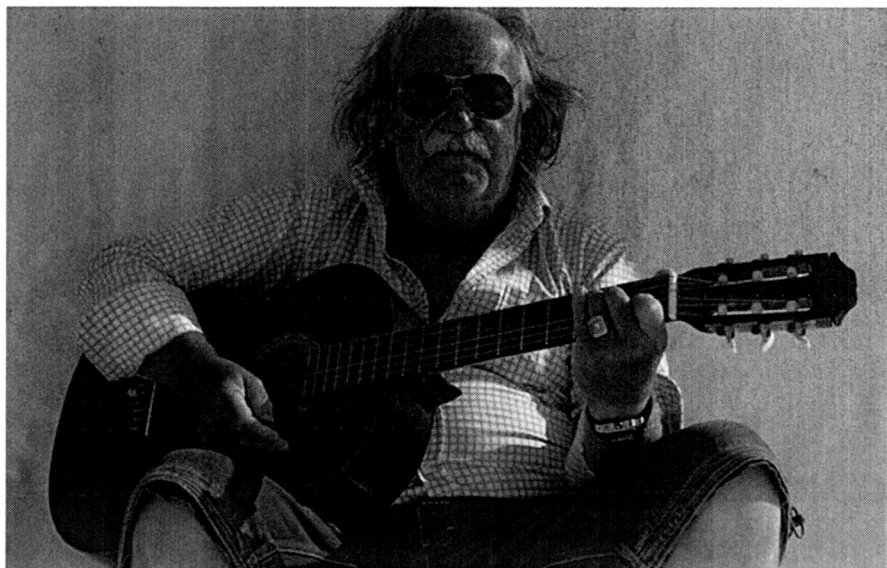
ME BEING DORUS



THE PAINTING FROM MY UNCLE



GUDRUN AND ME IN MONACO



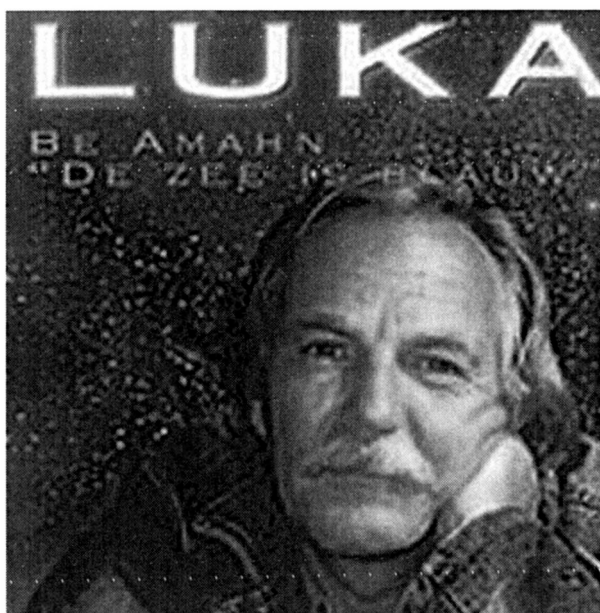
SINGING MY SONG AROUND THE WORLD



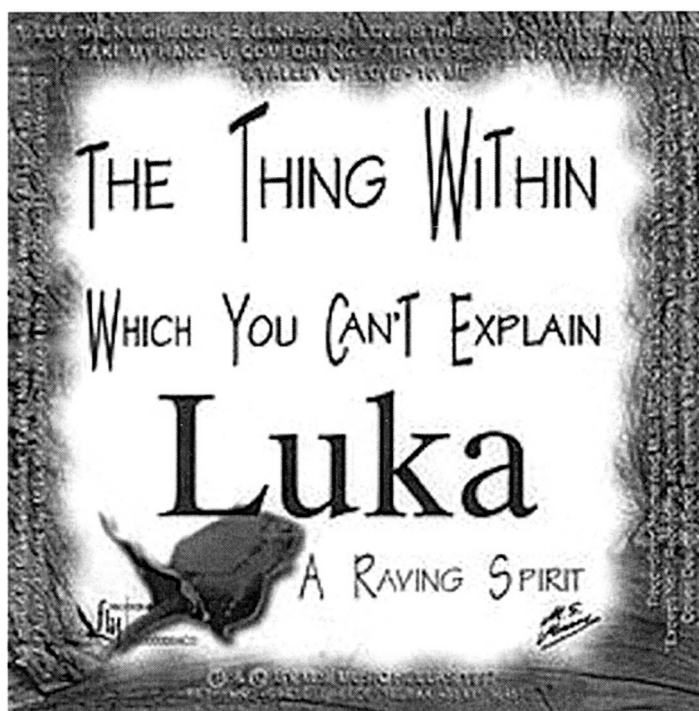
SINGING IN SOEST



RECORDING MANY SONGS



MY VERY FIRST SINGLE IN THE NETHERLAND



THE FIRST ALBUM

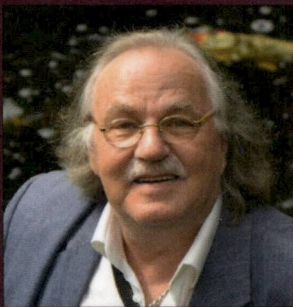


PROMOTING MY BOOK IN DUTCH IN THE NETHERLANDS

This book not only reads like a movie. It *is* a movie!

What did Tom Manders (Dorus), Bhagwan (Osho), and Prince Bernhard have in common? Who witnessed the last execution of the death penalty by hanging in the infamous Fremantle Prison in Western Australia?

In his book, the protagonist/writer (1944) wanders the world in search for his true self. He witnesses some important historical events along the way. For example, the book begins with a narration of the oppressive atmosphere in post-war Netherlands, followed by his subsequent migration to Australia in the late 50s where he was left behind as a 13-year-old boy by his parents. The book also tells us of his arduous struggle to survive in Australia in the 60s. He goes through a divorce and hospitalization in a psychiatric hospital where he meets the virtuoso pianist David Helfgott (whose life inspired the Oscar-winning film "Shine"). After that period, he returns to the Netherlands and marries the secretary of Prince Bernhard at the time of the Lockheed affair in the late 70s. In the 80s, he joins the Bhagwan movement and is present at the death of Osho. Throughout the story, he enjoins



the reader to follow his quest for spiritual awareness and inner growth, his career as a singer/entertainer, and his numerous casual and less casual romances and love affairs.

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